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Aesthetic Activism: The Poetics of Stage Direction in the Theaters of Apollinaire, Artaud, and Genet

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Aesthetic Activism: The Poetics of Stage Direction in the Theaters of Apollinaire, Artaud, and Genet

by

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Dedication

For Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, who taught me that reading and writing are the lights in the dark. I did it for DAF.

They stage the text as fields of action,
who through activist reverie
offer their work as a commodity.
Yet there's purpose to the delivery!
Politics provoke poetic measures
to expose systems of despotism
that regulate distributing pleasures.

The reader : I am the trick. *(who after voting*
with the text feels sick) Shame on these italics!
complicit evil!
(*returns home after infected*)
poisoned with the truth; power
is only a theater of authority
to mask the materiality
of our powerlessness before death.

RJS Austin '18

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Abstract

Aesthetic Activism: The Poetics of Stage Direction in the Theaters of Apollinaire, Artaud, and Genet

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This dissertation explores textual stage directions (didascalie) in selected works of twentieth-century French drama, specifically, Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (1917), Antonin Artaud's *Les Cenci* (1935), and Jean Genet's *Le Balcon* (1956). With close readings framed by current scholarship, I determine how theatrical properties of sound, appearance and gesture work to create dynamics between the modes of stage direction and performed dialogue. I argue that the authors' stage directions establish a poetics that undermine discourses of power voiced by characters who are figures of authority: hero, husband, father, judge, etc. The poetics of stage direction in these dramas are purposeful to challenge traditional power structures, provoke sociopolitical commentary, and transform a community. I define their poetic systems within the dramas as 'aesthetic activism,' that is the disruption of traditional forms of representation as a means of sociopolitical expression.

I evaluate the textual dynamics between didascalic and dialogic modes, that results in the disruption of representation, alongside Jacques Rancière's concepts of 'mute speech' and 'aesthetic regime.' In doing so, I determine how the innovation of a 'mute but not silent' stage direction poetics work with discourses of power related to contemporary social contexts. Through manipulating the communicative system of stage direction--that seeks articulation between playwright and reader concerning material conditions and didactic commands--each author creates a space of interaction through work. This is purposeful to challenge the reader and make them question how power functions within the drama, as well as outside the text, off the stage, and in the real world. Aesthetic activism, as a theoretical approach to artistic forms, offers a multidisciplinary payoff for studies in aesthetics, literature, history, and activism. Moreover, mute speech poetics, like those of stage direction, offer contemporary directors, poets, scholars, and performers alternative approaches to social commentary within and around textual and discursive modes.

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Introduction

One could argue that stage direction is the most 'aesthetic' form of artistic expression, for indeed it is not merely a distribution of sense experience, but an apotheosis of perceptible art. Lighting, costume, sound, set design, declamation, gesture, even tactile or olfactory manipulations; all influence correspondences across the senses. These associations, and their possible expression of meaning, establish a poetics that is not merely a "skillfully contrived imitation"[1] of an author's text, but rather a "use of language."[2] In literature, the aesthetic system of stage direction offers the poet the possibility to achieve not only representation, but also an expression of an idea, emotion, comment or command. To make this clearer, we can look to definitions of the aesthetic to gain a better understanding of the possibilities of stage direction, and its textual mode[3] of

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[1] This definition of poetics corresponds to the concept of mimesis in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which Rancière uses as the basis for defining the poetics and regime of representation. In his chapter "From Representation to Expression" Rancière contrasts Aristotelian poetics of representation with what he calls the new poetics of expression that define his concept of the aesthetic regime. The poetics of representation are constructed on four parts: fiction, genre, decorum, and presence. Also included in the traditional definition of poetics are the classical terms of *inventio* of the choice of subject, *dispositio* that arranges the parts, and *elocutio*

[2] Ranciere's full quote is thus: "There has nonetheless occurred a substitution in the paradigm of living speech, so that writing has become living speech. This new paradigm now governs poetry, making it no longer a genre of *belles lettres*, defined by the principle of fiction, but a use of language, one that is most exemplarily demonstrated in the prose of the anti-genre that is the novel" (55).

[3] The dissertation employs the term 'mode' often to describe the dialogic and didascalic aspects of a theatrical text. For a definition of 'mode' one must acknowledge Aristotle who defines mimesis or imitation along three categories: the medium, the object, and the mode. To differentiate mode, or manner "moyen," from the other two, in Part 3 of *Poétique*, Aristotle compares the works of Homer, Sophocles and Aristophanes. They use the same medium of lyric verse, they imitate the same objects of noble people, but they have different manners of imitation that are the epic, tragic, and comic, as well as different ways of presenting people through describing situations in themselves or from afar (1448ab). In *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama,* Keir Elam states in regards to Aristotle's differentiation: "this is not merely a technical distinction but constitutes, rather, one of the cardinal principles of a poetics of the drama as opposed to one of narrative fiction. The distinction is, indeed, implicit in Aristotle's differentiation of representational modes, namely *diegesis* (narrative description) versus *mimesis* (direct imitation)" (111). In the dramas of the current study, I evaluate the tensions, gaps, and dynamics between these modes that work

the didascalie, as a use of language. In the prelude to his collection *Aisthesis: scenes from the aesthetic regime of art*, Jacques Rancière defines aesthetics as "material conditions - performance and exhibition spaces, forms of circulation and reproduction - but also modes of perception and regimes of emotion" (x). In the introduction to *Aesthetic Revolutions*, Ales Erjavec blends Rancière and Shiller's thought to define the aesthetic thusly: "while referring to the general perception of the senses, (the aesthetic) will in the case of the aesthetic avant-gardes relate primarily to their demand to move from representation to transformation of a community. . . . The aesthetic is the articulation between art, the individual, and the community" (2-3). Rancière and Erjavec's definitions of the aesthetic establish a theoretical foundation for my readings of stage directions as material conditions and modes of perception meant to transform a community. Both Rancière and Erjavec employ definitions of the aesthetic, based on apparent changes to traditional forms of representation, as criteria for their own classifications of art forms: Rancière's regimes and Erjavec's aesthetic revolutions. The current study approaches changes to forms of representation, and specifically stage direction, not as criteria for classifications of art based on extended periods of history, like revolution or regime. Instead I argue for the concept of an aesthetic activism that is a continual expression of protest alive in each experience of the artwork and not confined to historical paradigms. In this study, the activism occurs when stage directions no longer support the story, lyric,

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to express an idea, a feeling, or a theory outside of the diegesis. For a brief example, in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the stage directions indicate that Thérèse throws a urinal out of the window that the husband says is a piano. This breaks the standard dynamic of dialogic and didascalic representation. This gap is meant to create tension between the modes that corresponds to an expression of sociopolitical concerns, specifically, the breakdown of the family, as well as a deliberate disturbance to meaning and representation for the purpose of poetic innovation to provoke surprise.

or discourse in drama, but rather work to undermine, contradict, or disrupt discourses and performed speech in order to express sociopolitical commentary to challenge and provoke the reader.

Political provocation can be found in the intermediary and communicative function of didascalie that establishes it as a literary mode corresponding to Erjavec's definition of the aesthetic as articulation between artisitic form and the individual. Even at their most minimalist form, the didascalie establishes communication between author and reader based upon material conditions of time and place, as well as commands to character and performer. From the *Dictionnaire étymologique* the origin of the term 'didascalie' refers to instructions, relative to the term didactic, for theater and performance as "indication de mise en scène du grec *didascalia*, 'enseignement'" (288).[4] According to Melissa Mueller, in the language of Greek tragedy "there were no stage directions in the modern sense" and reference to theatrical properties are communicated via "demonstrative verbal markers, or deictics" (7). In her book *Objects as actors,* she states their purpose as "theater deictics often actively create the specific features of the dramatic environment to which they simultaneously refer" (7). In addition, Nancy Felson observes, "deictics bridge the tangible world of reality and the abstract world of fantasy" (253). This establishes Greek theater deictics as a materially focused language used for setting and prop, and thus an early expression of a didascalic poetic. Interestingly, in its

[4] *Le Trésor de la langue française* expands the etymology to include Christian antiquity during which the term evolves away from theatrical performance to a religious role: "enseignement relatif à la discipline ecclésiastique." The evolution of the term highlights a methodology responsible for both theatrical and religious performance, and thus command over a system of symbolic language. *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi, ATILF - CNRS & Université de Lorraine.

origins, didascalic language was part of performance, thus spoken and not relegated to a silent mode. This language was infused with the poetic purpose of establishing a material sense to objects like Ajax's weaponry or Clytemnestra's tapestry through deictics (Mueller, 9). A separation must have occurred with the advent of printed text to result in the formations of distinct modes of silent didascalie and spoken dialogic language in theater. In the context of printed literature, Franck Evrard defines didascalie as "toutes les indications données par l'auteur en dehors du texte à dire; elles comprennent la liste et la qualification des personnages, le découpage de la pièce, les indications de lieu et de temps. Leur rôle est d'aider à lire et à interpréter l'œuvre dramatique" (104). Expanding Evrard's definition, Vincent Addiaba categorizes didascalie in two groups. Firstly, there is the *didascalie introductive* that introduce the scene and character and can either be minimal, to allow the reader to create the scene, or descriptive and fixed firmly by the playwright (366 - 367). Secondly there are the *didascalie intégrées*, distributed throughout the dialogue to "préciser le contexte de la communication" (366) and exist as "participal, narrative, or adverbial" grammatical forms (367).

According to Addiaba, their analysis ("décryptage") confirms the dynamics of the theatrical text, which anticipates and produces an intended rhythm for the reading of the work (373). Addiaba concludes that didascalies "méritent d'être prises en compte dans la recherche des hypothèses de signification. Elles ne sont jamais muettes" (373). Both definitions highlight the importance of reading didascalie as opposed to speaking it, what Addiaba calls the *lisibilité objective* (374). This establishes the didascalie as a textual mode in which the author communicates to the reader about how to approach the story.

Moreover, in *Jeux didascaliques et espaces mentaux,* Sanda Golopentia offers a definition of the didascalie form that opens it to interpretive approaches concerning poetics: “elles peuvent avoir une forme abrégée, rapide, minimaliste, dénuée de qualité spéciales d'écriture. Elles peuvent aussi connaître – et ceci est une évolution plus récente – des formes poétiques, hautement subjectives, jargonnantes, etc” (20).[5] Whether stylized or minimalist, the didascalic mode traditionally works to provide information concerning space, time, rhythm, emotion, and character movement to assist a representation of the diegesis: the telling of the story.

However, there is a double articulation to the directions of a theatrical text. They constitute instructions concerning movement and emotion of the character in the diegetic realm, but also commands to the actor in the extra-diegetic realm of the performance. But could there exist a third interaction between the *énonciateur* and the *allocutaire* of the didascalic mode? What if the directions seek to give command not only to the character of a story, or an actor in an imagined staging, but also commands to the reader in the real world? Thierry Gallèpe examines how didascalie are reader-oriented to create a fictional world, to “construire une représentation d'un univers diégétique fictionnel” (89) as well as a staged performance in a “représentation d'un univers scénique” (91). But what about a third “univers,” or realm, where didascalie becomes a mode of articulation between author and reader to construct an *univers réel* to comment on the real world outside of the

[5] Sanda Golopentia describes didascalie, like a poetic text, as a text "tabulaire, supposant une manière spécifique d'occuper la page” (16). In the essay, Sanda categorizes didascalie in four types: paratextual (title, subtitle, directorial), spatio-temporal, dynamic (controlling movement of actors as well as scenes and acts), and locutoire (concerning descriptions of the actor.)

diegesis, outside of the imagined performance?[6] The current study examines the use of textual stage direction as a space for communication between author and reader to establish sociopolitical commentary. The intended aim is to evaluate the possibilities and effects of a didascalic poetic[7] as an aesthetic activism. Through analyzing theeatrical texts, I demonstrate how the poetical system is not confined to the didascalie, but rather works via the dynamics, whether supportive or disruptive, between the didascalic mode of direction and the dialogic mode of discourse. Traditionally, the aesthetics of drama employ material properties of didascalie to enhance the delivery of a discourse through material presence. However, in the context of the selected dramas of the current study, this dynamic works to purposefully undermine or challenge discourses to critique them for sociopolitical commentary and protest.

Before exploring how each author uses stage directions to undermine discourse and weaken power, it is helpful to have an example of how stage directions give support to discourse in order to strengthen an ideology. In 1795, DAF de Sade resituates a philosophical dialogue with performative didascalie in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*.[8]

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[6] Golopentia speaks of links between theater and the real life of the reader that the scholar calls "la mise-en-scène effective" (21) that elicit a personal response or feeling in the imagination of the reader based on references to possible familiar locations, events, character names, etc. But I would like to push this further, going beyond just sympathetic connections, to acutally creating a dialogue from a distance between the work and contemporary society through the medium of the reader of dramatic text.

[7] Benoît Barut studies didascalie in twentieth-century French drama, specifically in the dramas of Genet and Beckett. In his article on Genet's theater "La didascalie et ses débords dans le théâtre de Jean Genet" he offers the term *poétique didascalique* to describe Genet's didascalie, although he thinks they are *commune* and thus less poetic stylistically (37). However, he evaluates their poetic functions of *décaler* and *déborder,* discussed further in the third chapter of this dissertation. I appropriate his term to the English didascalic poetic that refers at once to the poetics inside the didascalie and their use vis-à-vis the performed dialogue.

[8] For more information concerning the influence of theater in his writings, see Annie Lebrun's work that situates Sade's *œuvres* vis-à-vis the theater. She claims "théâtre réel, théâtre virtuel, c'est autour de cet espace imaginaire que la vie et l'œuvre de Sade se confondent pour faire surgir, comme un nouveau lieu

In the enlightened libertine tradition of employing the erotic to instruct,[9] the work seeks to teach the reader, through the character of Eugénie, the discourse of libertine philosophy through the material conditions of sexual pleasure in order to transform the individual and the community. In short, during the narrative, the libertine instructors combine ideas of philosophy with physical orgasm. In the text, Sade combines dialogic discourse with didascalic commands concerning bodily movement. For example, Eugénie reaches orgasm before she listens to a discourse on libertine Republican ethics entitled "Français encore un effort." After the performative reading of the pamphlet, the ethics of *libertinage* "turn on" the orgy to repeat the sex. Sade situates the text thusly:

> Eugénie, *rendant le foutre qu'elle a dans le cul et dans la bouche*: Hélas! mon maître... vous voyez comme vos élèves m'ont accommodée! J'ai le derrière et la bouche pleins de foutre, je ne dégorge que du foutre de tous les côtés! (Sade, Vol. 3, 160)

Through a content reading, we understand that the words and fluids of the libertines are the *foutre* that is inside her body, and by extension, her mind. The orgy and the philosophy are equal aspects of an instructional method that, according to Sade, produces an enlightened student. However, along a form-based reading, there is a combination of didascalic and dialogic modes meant to build a signifier of the libertine educational system in the term *foutre,* which is both abstract idea of ethic and material prop of fluid. By employing the material conditions of didascalie with the discourse of dialogic philosophy, Sade sets out to make his theory materialize in practice, as well as his praxis embody theory. This text is an example of an aesthetic system that is an

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mental, ce que j'appelle le premier théâtre de l'athéisme" (31). Furthermore, see essays in *Sade's Sensibilities* (Parker and Sclippa.)

[9] See Paul J. Young's *Seducing the Eighteenth Century Reader*.

epistemological structure of staged sensation attached to an idea for the purpose of transformation.[10] Similar to the staged sex being a collision of bodies, the staged text is a coupling of bodies, a hybridization of genres, specifically dialogic philosophy and didascalic performance. This hybrid text creates an aesthetic system, along the lines of Rancière and Erjavec's definitions, of material conditions, articulation and transformation. Sade uses didascalie to support his discourse by grounding it in a material condition. He combines philosophy with fluids (and the related senses of pain or pleasure) so that the reader can use the text to perform the method.

In contrast to Sade's support system, the dramas in this study employ material conditions of didascalie to create a poetics that works to undermine discourses of characters that are figures of authority like husbands, fathers, and judges. This disturbance of discourse and tension between modes renders the dramatic text as an activism. The current study defines activism, based upon the collection *Global Activism,* as a "field of action," to replace the art-object, consisting "of verbal instructions or performative actions" (57) related to the "activists' deep dissatisfaction with existing democracies, above all with representative democracies" (32). The changes to stage directions result in a textual field of action with verbal instructions to the reader concerning the systems of power in the real world. This understanding of textual dynamics as activism puts the poetics of stage direction in dialogue with politics.

[10] In *Sade: From Materialism to pornography* Caroline Warman navigates the connections between Enlightenment materialist philosophy and Sade's work to define his philosophy as "sensationist materialism." Her textual analysis shows how Sade presses "sensationist materialism determinedly into the system of libertinage." (72) The physical orgasm and the philosophical idea become one in this system, repeated *ad infinitum* throughout his *Œuvres*.

Moreover, through this correlation, we can understand changes to art forms as not only expressing dissatisfaction with political representation, but also with existing aesthetic representations to challenge traditional forms and modes. This association between politics and art works well with Rancière's assertion that "the aesthetic is homologous with the political" (Bray, 258).[11] The current study employs a definition of political expression, constructed along Rancière's theory, as the disturbance of hierarchies of representation imposed upon the distribution of sense experience.[12]

To further develop the claim that an aesthetic act can be an activist act to protest power structures, I look to Rancière's theory on the aesthetics of politics. Rancière unites political theory with aesthetic theory to determine his classification of art that is the "aesthetic regime." Following Rancière's thought, social activism, which can result in changes to the political field, is potentially homologous with the aesthetic activism of the artistic field. Rancière's aesthetico-political[13] theory works well with my analysis of

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[11] Patrick Bray clarifies this statement in saying "One of Rancière's recurring arguments is that while art and politics act in similar ways, they are not the same thing--there is an art to politics, and a politics to art, but art is not politics" (2)

[12] An understanding of the political in Rancière's work often involves the tensions between his use of the French terms "la politique," "la police," and "le politique." For further information on various scholars' readings of this division and difference see Chambers *The Lessons of Rancière* (50 - 57). Martín Plot divides the language between 'politics' and 'the police.' He claims that in Rancière's work "The police are on the one hand, the given distribution of social positions, hierarchies, functions, visibilities and invisibilties characteristic of any social order understood as the partition of the perceptible. Politics is, on the other hand, the egalitarian disruption of such distributions. The concept of the political is the ground common to both politics and the police" (96). In his own words, Rancière states in the *Distribution of the Sensible* that "politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (13). Rancière's views on the political correspond to a language indicative of theatrical text that in its power controls what is said and seen, who can speak, and what is the material setting. This definition establishes not only the theater's relation to the political, but also a politics inherent in theatrical text among modes.

[13] This is a term I use frequently in the dissertation. Martín Plot offers this term to replace modern democracy. He defines the aesthetico-political via Rancière's 'aesthetic régime.' For instance, Plot states "translated into this investigation on the aesthetic regime of politics, it could be said that modernity is the historical experience in which the aesthetic regime prevails. Modern democracy is thus, the period

directions. It elucidates the claim that the study of changes to the function of didascalie in theater can offer an array of scholarly, and even practical, ways to understand the systems that regulate law, distribute perception, and maintain power through command off the stage and in the real world. In this way, we can understand politics as a form of *didascalie sociale* that is command and instruction concerning how one performs their role in society. When didascalie is read as a mode of sociopolitical expression via poetical innovation, this change to the traditional form becomes an example of aesthetic activism. The activist force is found in the dynamic interplay between didascalie and diegetic narrative that is, in the selected works, absurd, violent, abusive and obscene staging of power. This study develops the art-action[14] of a didascalic poetic to show that there are modes of activism outside of performed language, and specifically in the "mute but not silent" textual mode of direction.

Didascalie as a mode of Mute Speech

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inaugurated with the advent of the aesthetico-political regime as the predominant one" (9). Plot defines his term via Rancière as "a certain regime of politics, a regime based on the indetermination of identities, the delegitimation of positions of speech, the deregulation of partitions of space and time" (9). The current study seeks to modify their claims to an understanding of aesthetic activism. This contrasts the historically based terms of regime that often becomes problematic. In a sense, I would like to define aesthetic activism via the relation between say political activism and a democratic government, as political activism is not politics, but it can influence political changes within a democratic government. Aesthetic activism is not a regime of art, or a historical movement, it is an expression of a disturbance, deregulation, and delegitimation of powers and partitions that is not subjugated to any time frame or historical context.

[14] In his introduction, Erjavec describes Italian futurism as "Futurists took their new type of political art into the street, into coffeehouses, and onto the San Marco square. They expanded the notion of art because they expected art and artists to intervene in society and to actively aid futurism in creating the desired future for the Italian nation. Pointing out the inherently activist nature of futurist art, Marinetti named it art-action, thereby opposing it to the contemplative gaze" (10). Art-action is also synonymous with my concept of "aesthetic activism" although the current study highlights the role of textual dynamics in the relation between poetics and the political, as opposed to on the street performance that defines Futurismo.

In the dissertation, I demonstrate how each author employs theatrical properties, specifically sound, appearance, and gestural effects, to undermine the reading of discourse. Even though the directions work within the material conditions of hearing, vision, and body, it is essential to state that the analysis focuses on how the properties disrupt the reading and the understanding of discourses as conveyed in the dramatic text. The analysis of this disruption focuses on the relation between the language and placement of mute direction juxtaposed against the spoken language of performance. In other words, the current study of the theatrical properties remains in the framework of the dramatic text, and not in the performance space of stage and theater. The author's poetics of theatrical properties are purposeful to influence feelings in the reader, specifically, surprise for Apollinaire, menace for Artaud, and confusion for Genet. These feelings become attached to relative expressions of sociopolitical commentary and aesthetics of theater. In this way, the dramas exhibit their theories concerning theater's function in society. Of course, performance is an essential aspect of each author's aesthetic systems, and the sound effects, costumes, and gestures are meant to be heard and seen, and not just read. It is clear from their theoretical essays and paratextual writings that they intend their work to be performed.[15] Moreover, there is substantial scholarship concerning

[15] In his work *Paratextes*, Genette categorizes many of these essays under the term preface. These include essays labeled *prologue*, *notice*, *avertissement* of which "many nuances distinguish one term from another, especially when two or more of these texts appear together, as in the didactic work, where the preface takes on a function simultaneously more formal and more circumstantial" (161). The authors in this study often employ these types of prefaces to outline their theories of theater that augment the expressive scope of their dramas outside of the diegesis, especially for aesthetico-political concerns. For Genet's work, Benoît Barut often classifies Genet's paratextual commentary as didascalie. This works because of their didactic function, as well as their relation to time and place corresponding to a hindsight view of his ideas for staging. This creates a correspondence between the didascalie and Genette's paratexts as didactic and circumstantial. However, not all didascalie are paratextual. I would not classify the sound effects or props

performances of the selected dramas.[16] The current study focuses on the text to determine the function of textual dynamics and the relation between changes to poetic representation and political expression. In the text, the aesthetic activism exists outside of the constraints of privilege that define theatrical performance, specifically, costs of production, spatial requirements, and audience participation.

For example, in the chapter on Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, I examine how the poet uses theatrical properties, such as sound and material object, to create a Poetics of Props that interrupt the reader's focus on the page as well as disrupt meaning of spoken language. Apollinaire disturbs the delivery and understanding of discourses of power performed by the main characters Thérèse and The Husband. When reading sound effects, it is necessary to consider their mute quality. The reader is not expected to produce the sound effect, although that could be a possibility. The meaning of the sound, like a buzz, a sneeze, or a train, disturbs the reader when found in the context of a domestic dispute. The conflictive use of the didascalic word disrupts the reading of the dialogic discourse. In Artaud's *Les Cenci*, the reader finds traditional poetic devices of lyric verse in the unspoken didascalie, while gestural movement and blocking often replace spoken discourse, silenced by the trauma and menace of the incest narrative. Artaud seems to flip the use of the modes to mute the control of traditional lyric device over expression, while also emphasizing an expressive language of action and gesture.

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in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* nor the extensive gestural movement and hyperbolic staging in Artaud's theater as paratexts. These types of set, delineated examples of language are expressive modes within the genre of theater that often contrast or augment the dialogic. But for Genet's drama, there is definitely a relation between paratexts and Genet's commentary.

[16] For example see Kimberly Jannarone's work on Artaud and Peter Read's work on *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. Both scholars will be cited again in the corresponding chapters.

Artaud does this to not only destabilize the reader's approach to theatrical text, but also to strengthen the poetic power of his directorial language, what I term his Poetics of Cruelty, that render the expressive didascalie as a 'mute assassin.' Through reading his textual drama, I demonstrate how the activist figure of Béatrice Cenci controls the mute assassin of the direction in the fourth act to overthrow the despotic and cruel authority of the Count Cenci. In Genet's *Le Balcon*, tensions between the material real world of the directions and simulated discourses and performances of authoritarian power establish a Poetics of Difference. This difference between reality and performance creates a *décalage,* or destabilizing, of meaning that extends to the discourses of the authority figures, and their corresponding social functions in the hierarchy of powers. In summation, through reading the texts we uncover deliberate approaches in each drama to employ a poetics of stage direction to undermine power and express sociopolitical protest.

This approach raises the stakes for textual theater in the context of poetic systems and the aesthetics of politics. For instance, Apollinaire seeks a synthesis of arts as one of the main tenets for his aesthetico-political theory of the *esprit nouveau* to innovate French society after the Great War. This synthesis of arts is evident in the text, published after the 1917 performance, which includes verse poetry, drama, cubist art, and music score. Artaud's opinion of text based theater is often contradictory, but leads to questions and paths of analysis for his complex theories on theater. In his *Theater of Cruelty* essays Artaud vehemently attacks the despotism of text-based theater. Yet, he alludes to the uniqueness and importance of the *Cenci* text in promotional literature before the 1935

performance. This contradiction has influenced scholars, like Martin Puchner and Kimberly Jannarone, to disregard the *Cenci* text in favor of the Theater of Cruelty essays or the actual performances, even though it represents a unique hybrid of scenario[17] and lyric tragedy. Furthermore, Genet's dramas are a prime example of the importance of textual theater. His writing method of *réécriture* and palimpseste[18] attests to the importance of reading that establishes communication across time with intended interlocutors of contemporary poets and future directors of his work.[19] In his directions and paratexts that abound throughout his political theater of the 1950's, including *Le Balcon*, *Les Nègres*, and *Les Paravents,* Genet augments the scope of his authorial voice to speak directly to the reader around and sometimes within the dramas. In this way, the didascalie is a space of communication between playwright and reader concerning how to approach the work. In doing so, he establishes a politics within his work that regulates the communication between the authorial voice and the reader's role.

When viewed together, these authors' dramas establish the importance of textual presence for theater that seems to matter more than the ephemeral performances that were heavily critiqued, sometimes met with riotous disdain, and often viewed as failures, either

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[17] Writing was important to Artaud's production and this reinforces his claim that the text is derived from mise-en-scène. Jannarone describes how Artaud's assistant Roger Blin "was to transcribe his directing in every manner possible. Artaud wanted to elevate the documentation of his work beyond production plan, blocking notes, or rehearsal record, into a transcription of divination" (166).

[18] Barut indicates the extensive, or excessive, didascalic commentary in Genet's work that reinforces the literariness of his theater. Audrey Lesmesle analyzes the differences between editions of Le Balcon to read Genet's form as "les réécritures successives du Balcon tendent ainsi à renforcer l'efficacité du propos central de la pièce. Cependant, malgré une dynamique de perfectionnement, la version définitive du *Balcon* ne semble pas annuler les états antérieurs du texte, si bien qu'il est possible d'envisager l'œuvre comme un palimseste" (106).

[19] In his paratextual preface "Comment jouer le Balcon" Genet criticizes the stagings of his work and offers ideas on how directors should read his text. In the "avertissement" he critiques "quelques poètes de nos jours" who seem to mistake political ideology in poetical expression, two things that can't exist together for Genet. This determines much of his aesthetic of difference in *Le Balcon*.

by contemporary journalists or the authors themselves. The performances are lost, or archived, or continually redeveloped and changed by contemporary directors.[20] However, the texts remain as testament to their aesthetic systems. When analyzed in depth, specifically on a level of the inherent dynamics between modes, we understand how their texts become fields of action. They express sociopolitical commentary concerning the function and presence of power discourses in society, as well as the role of theater and staged poetics as a form of art-action.

To further elaborate this relation between stage directions and political expression we can turn to Rancière who states in *The Politics of Aesthetics* that "politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct 'fictions,' that is to say material arrangements of signs and images" (39). The function of "material arrangements of signs and images" puts politics in dialogue with art, and even more so, with the textual mode of didascalie that concerns itself with this very thing: material arrangements of signs and images. For example, the didascalic mode distributes role, rhythm, and property to a theatrical text, while also supporting, or disrupting, the diegesis. Rancière relies heavily on literature, and thus his work offers a theoretical lens to understand literary modes. The current study seeks to apply his concepts, specifically 'mute speech' and the 'aesthetic regime,' which he defines via the French novel, to an understanding of the didascalic poetic in twentieth-century

[20] For example, François Poulenc adapted *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* in 1947 into a successful Opéra bouffe. He preferred to focus on the comical story that delivers a serious message while removing the prologue, changing the locus to Monte Carlo and time frame to 1912 thus removing the Great war context. He also toned down the references to death and any apparent anger towards discourses of authorities. In terms of its direction Poulenc stated "une seule condition, précisait-il, pas d'avant-garde!" (Read, 225). Despite these changes, Peter Read describes the reception of the opera in 1947 as "cris et protestations accompagnent chacunes des représentation, preuve que l'œuvre d'Apollinaire avait quand même conservé une part de sa charge déstabilisante" (225).

drama. In the introduction to *Understanding Rancière, understanding modernism*, Patrick Bray states “Rancière's emphasis on literature stems from the link between the written word and emancipation” (4). In terms of the emancipation aspect of the written letter, the authors in this study employ the language of didascalie to create a mode for an emancipated authorial voice detached from the diegesis and the performance. This method expands the use of the language of the extradiegetic realm to create free communication with the reader of anywhere at anytime.

The written word of didascalic language is traditionally meant to be read to establish the material conditions of theater, as well as instruct as to character emotion and bodily movement. Even though it is a silent mode, it is still an active language whose dynamics affect the rhythm and dimension of the scene. This 'mute but not silent' essence of direction corresponds to Rancière's concept of mute speech, detailed in the book of the same name. In this work he navigates the silent revolution occurring in the shadow of the political one throughout the nineteenth century. Across his works, Rancière uses this silent revolution as the basis for the switch between a poetics of representation and a poetics of expression[21] that determines the separation, although diagonal, between the

[21] In the first chapter of Mute Speech "From Representation to expression" Rancière defines the poetics of representation along Aristotle's four points cited above in footnote 1. He states "the system of representation depends upon the equivalence between the act of representation and the affirmation of speech as action" (MS 48). This is one of the foundational principles of representation that these authors seek to disrupt that is the equivalence between the actions on the stage and the discourse of the characters. Rancière defines the difference as "Representative poetry was composed of stories submitted to principles" like decorum and verisimilitude. He claims "the new poetry-expressive poetry- is made of sentences and images, sentence-images that have an inherent value as manifestations of poeticity, that claim a relation immediately expressive of poetry." He witnesses this new expressive poetry in the novel, but I will show its effect in the prose of stage directions that work to express sociopolitical concerns and not just define the material representation to support a story.

regimes of the representational and the aesthetic.[22] He uses this shift as the basis to rename and resituate the classical versus modern dialectic. The poetics of expression overturn the hierarchies of traditional poetics of representation. In this action of overturning and disrupting hierarchy, these poetics of expression that define the aesthetic regime, become a political force, specifically a democratic one. The aesthetic regime of art, the mute-loquacious letter, and modern democracy are corresponding terms for Rancière. Furthermore, mute speech is an expressive mode through which aesthetics, politics, and poetics are essentially the same thing. Mute speech is defined as the speech voiced or carried by mute objects (74), a "hieroglyph that bears its idea upon its body"[23] (46) and a "regime of utterance, in which human speech is petrified and dispersed, incarnated in inanimate objects or disembodied" (Bray, 252). Rancière's work offers two examples of mute speech: the expressiveness of silent objects and the mute-loquacious letter that is simultaneously silent and talkative. The current study seeks to extend both types of mute speech to readings of the didascalie to investigate the expressiveness of mute theatrical properties, like material props and textual sound effects, as well as the mute-loquacious influence of poetic prose in the stage directions of theatrical text.

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[22] Robert St. Clair clearly defines Rancières régimes as "a problematic in Le Partage du sensible, though important theoretical outlines of two of the regimes can be found in La Parole muette. For Rancière, there are three regimes of art, each characterized by different logics, stakes, and, to a certain degree, temporalities: the ethical regime, the poetic or representative regime, and the aesthetic regime." (Bray, 255).

[23] The hieroglyph of mute speech recalls Artaud's emphasis of his gestural language as a form of moving hieroglyph. In his essay "La mise en scène et la métaphysique," Artaud describes his gestural language as "ces signes constituent de véritables hiéroglyphes, où l'homme, dans la mesure où contribue à les former, n'est qu'une forme comme une autre . . . Ce langage qui évoque à l'esprit des images d'une poésie naturelle intense donne bien l'idée de ce que pourrait être au théâtre une poésie dans l'espace indépendante du langage articulé" (526).

To develop the first example of mute speech, Rancière looks to Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* to find expressivity in the silent stones on the Cathedral. This new poetics he claims is a "strict and term for term reversal of the four principles that structured the representative system" (50) while also being "works that speak as images, as stones, as matter that resists the signification whose vehicle it is" (59). This corresponds to the silent props that express other significations, like the balloons, rubber balls, and sound effects in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the mute assassins in *Les Cenci*, and the light fixtures, costumes, ritual objects and mirrors in *Le Balcon*. They are all silent or mute objects that have an expressivity related to undermining discourses of power. To define the second aspect of the mute-loquacious letter, Rancière looks to Balzac's *Le Curé de village* that "tells the mortal danger of writing and the intrinsic link between writing and democracy" (101). For Rancière, the copy of *Paul et Virginie* that disrupts life in the provincial town is an example of a disruptive power exemplified in the "democratic circulation of the letter." In joining his analysis of Balzac's work with Flaubert's, he reads the mute-loquacious letter, that is the novel, as a power to dismantle systems and hierarchies thus rendering literature as a "field defined simultaneously by the indifference of style to subject (writing speaks of anything in any way to anyone) and the affirmation of a specific 'poetic mode of language.'" In *Mute Speech,* Rancière provides literary examples of this power of poetics to disrupt traditional systems of representation and their corresponding hierarchies of power. He finds these examples in Hugo and Balzac, but also in Flaubert's absolutization of style, the Mallarmean book, and Proust's providing of literature with a material originating from "radical experiences" and the

"transparent substance of our best moments." For Rancière, Proust represents a literature that eliminates the gap between "the work and commentary on the work" (165).

The current study seeks to apply similar concepts, which Rancière finds in the novel, to an understanding of theater. In doing so, this study demonstrates how textual theater and the poetics of stage direction materialize "the work and commentary on the work" in order to provoke commentary on that which is outside of the work: the social world. My analysis of textual theater is similar to Rancière's readings of the novel that focus on tensions inherent in literature's mute material properties as well as poetic modes that seek to disrupt traditional hierarchies and structures. The didascalic poetics of the dramas are a similar mode of expression for the democratic disruption that Rancière finds in the mute speech of the letter and the silent stones. According to Alison James, Rancière's concept of mute speech "lays the groundwork for the subsequent development of his thought on aesthetics, in particular his description of the regimes of art; thus the move from the normative poetics of representation to the aesthetic regime" (253). In contrast to Rancière, my analysis draws from literature not to support a regime but to offer an understanding of a protest that is activism.

An application of Rancière's theory helps to show that the didascalic poetic expresses the same "paradoxical power of mute speech to disrupt, express, and signify" (254). As noted above, for Rancière "the aesthetic and the political are homologous" (258) as the aesthetic is a "delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 13). Is that not the very

definition of the mode of didascalie: configuring time through rhythm, and space through location and setting? Detailing the limits of the visible on the scene including object and actor? Controlling the articulation of speech and noise? All for the purpose of staging the locus and stakes of the experience of a politics voiced by the characters as well as 'performed' by the reader? Rancière politicizes the aesthetic in his concept of the aesthetic regime that is autonomy and emancipation from "any and all specific rules or hierarchic ordering of subjects, genres, and arts" (33). Didascalie then offers a poetic space to express Rancière's concepts of the aesthetic regime and mute speech because it does away with hierarchy in its "axiom of equality" that creates a mode of expression in which author, reader, director, spectator, and character exist as interlocutors in the extra-diegetic realm of the text. The representative regime, like a reactionary politics, concerns itself with standard, structured hierarchical modes of traditional systems of command, subservient to the diegesis of a national narrative. However, when didascalie becomes imbued with poetic purpose meant to disrupt, then this creates a terrain of battle, a 'field of action' between the modes of dialogic and didascalic language that results in an expression of protest.

In the following chapters I examine this field of action, this aesthetic activism, found in the tension and dynamics of the dramatic text. The authors employ the expressiveness of silent objects in a mute-loquacious mode to overturn traditional representation and the restrictions of theatrical performance. Textual theater then becomes a democratic means of being anywhere at anytime and exemplifies the mute power of literature to disrupt hierarchies of representation that police the distribution of

perception. Like the *belles lettres* of representational poetics, performance is subject to rules and restrictions of privilege. It takes money to procure space, props, and actors. This budget in turn necessitates the selling of tickets, and thus a class who can afford the time and money to attend theater. As Rancière states, performance is "too material and not material enough" to reach a poetics of "language and bodies of things" (*Mute Speech*, 165). But textual theater achieves this through the dynamics between modes that have a substance in text to travel freely. Theatrical performance comes and goes, stylized to the times, but the theatrical text endures to continually provoke a protest with each reading. This is the aim of the current project: to read textual drama as a use of language that disrupts power and becomes activism.

Organization and Chapters

In each chapter, after introducing the text, context, and argumentation, I first present the aesthetic theories of each author detailed in manifestos and paratextual essays, so that, with the assistance of current scholarship, I can develop their aesthetics of politics. Once I define each author's methods, I can then demonstrate how these are staged via the poetics of the didascalie. To do so, I examine the stage directions of the dramas via close readings framed by an analytic approach that focuses on theatrical properties of appearance, sound, and gesture. I evaluate their textual dynamics to show how their changes to form provoke a politics through engaging with discourses of power. To establish this dynamic, I analyze the tensions and relations between the languages of

didascalic and dialogic modes. Furthermore, I connect these tensions to portrayals and conflicts of their characters, to then read the characters and props as figures for the authors' aesthetic and poetical systems. There is a correspondence between the extradiegetic dynamics of the text, as well as the diegetic conflicts between husband/wife, father/daughter, and patron/prostitute. This representative relation echoes Jacques Derrida's description of characters in Artaud's Theater of Cruelty "who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the 'creator'" (235). In this poetical association that links characters to modes in the context of conflict, tensions, and discourses of power, we find the dramatists' expressions of sociopolitical concerns to read their works as aesthetic activism.

Chapter 1 examines Apollinaire's surrealist drama *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* first performed in June 1917 and first published in January 1918. At the time of the performance, Apollinaire was also writing aesthetic theory of the *esprit nouveau*. He saw manifestations of this aesthetic in cubist art, Cocteau's ballet-russe "Parade," music by Erik Satie, his own *Calligrammes*, as well as the staging of his drama he defines as "sur-réaliste." Through comparing and contrasting the key terms of *surréalisme* and *esprit nouveau*, I am able to define his poetics of stage direction to then understand how they embody his aesthetico-political theory. Through analyzing the dynamic interplay between performed text and didascalie, I am able to evaluate his 'poetics of props.' I argue that he uses this poetic system to undermine the power discourses of his characters and establish sociopolitical critique. His innovation of stage direction grounds his social commentary in the material conditions of the mute prop that includes not only theatrical properties of

object and sound, but also gendered actor and audience. I read the violent transition of the gendered body in the drama as a staging of a transition for aesthetics from victimization to activism. By turning his reader/spectator into a prop, Apollinaire includes the public in this transition and empowers them with agency in the *esprit nouveau* activism.

Chapter 2 examines *Les Cenci,* written, directed, and starring surrealism outcast Antonin Artaud. I read the directions of the tragedy alongside Artaud's theoretical "Theater of Cruelty" essays as well as journalism related to the production of *Les Cenci* and Kimberly Jannarone's extensive scholarly work. This method offers a complete scope of Artaud's complex and contradictory aesthetic staged in the tragedy. Next, turning to the *Cenci* text, I examine the theatrical properties in the didascalie to highlight Artaud's interplay with lyric verse structures and sensory poetics of sound and gesture. I juxtapose this exchange against the thematic presence of destructive incest, to read the tragedy as a *mise-en-abyme* of *mise-en-scène*. In other words, Artaud employs the historical Cenci story to stage his system of action speech, what I term his 'Poetics of Cruelty.' I show how Artaud frequently mixes the modes by infusing traditional poetic devices in stage directions as a means of "muting" their influence over expression, while also augmenting the presence of his gestural language. Through applying current scholarship on Artaud's use of trauma, we can understand his silencing of lyric and his use of silent but expressive gesture as a means of staging the trauma associated with the incest narrative. I read this as an example of an aesthetic activism in which Artaud stages dialogic and didascalic forms as a destructive incest. This destruction aimed at despotic structures--like the Count and representational theater--comments on the rise of fascism while also offering an ideal of

cultural change through the martyr/activist figure of Béatrice. I modify Jannarone's critique of Artaud's director as fascist dictator. Indeed fascism plays a central role in his theater, and specifically the director's control over theatrical modes that he stages in the figures of his characters. Yet I claim that his theater is not an exercise of fascism, but a means of subversion of power structures through extra-diegetic textual dynamics.

A generation after the Theater of Cruelty, Genet abandons prose and existential theater for a political theater that questions and exposes power structures of Post-War France. Chapter 3 examines his *tableaux* in *Le Balcon* that stage power struggles between simulations of reactionary authority figures - queen, judge, bishop, general, and aristocrat - with the worker revolution in the streets. I argue that Genet uses didascalic and dialogic modes to create a poetics of difference to undermine discourses spoken by his actors who simulate various power structures. My analysis uncovers that this difference extends beyond dramatic and sociopolitical critique to a level of text. His characters are not who they appear to be and neither is the text that they speak. Through the poetics of difference, Genet stages banned text, and specifically Sade, in order to protest censorship and subvert the court case against his publisher J-J Pauvert. Genet's changes to dramatic form and challenges to power highlight a functioning system of aesthetic activism that puts banned text on display. This system undermines the dangers of banned text through parody, while forcing the authority figure of the Judge to ironically speak it in the second *tableau*, even though the court seeks in reality to suppress it.

Overall, the study shows that these authors' textual systems create a disturbance to power produced in the dynamic between the modes of didascalie and dialogue. It must be

said that this dissertation is not a form of activism in itself. I do not make a political statement through manipulating the intrinsic dynamics of the traditional dissertation form (although that would be fun.) My study does not voice one particular viewpoint or discourse for sociopolitical change. It will certainly not solve the world's problems. But perhaps by digging deeper into the dynamics of theater, the aesthetics of protest, and the relations between text and politics, we can gain a better understanding of how literature works in society. Theater can offer material conditions for transformation, and thus a more 'aesthetic' approach to the delivery of an idea than the prose novel, the manifesto, the film, or the philosophical text, while having the ability to give presence to all. Yet, aesthetic activism does not only exist in theater. It can be found where the deliberate manipulation of the intrinsic dynamics of artistic form provokes a politics. Aesthetic activism is a new theoretical approach to understanding art works, the communicative powers of their mute spaces, and their function in society as a form of disruption.

Chapter 1: The Poetics of Props in Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*

"On this night of ritual, invoking our master, to procreate the unholy bastard."
- Papa Emeritus I

Introduction

During the 2015 spring semester, I directed a production of Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* featuring undergraduate students. They became emotionally invested in the comic drama because of the transgender and feminist content that speaks to their contemporary social issues and campus climate. Despite the students' attraction to words like "féministe" and "homme-femme," the language in the drama often confused them with *jeux de mots*, neologisms, inside jokes, and contextual references to the *actualité* of *Grande guerre* France.[24] Moreover, certain contrasts between the stage directions and the performed lyric added further confusion. For example, one student asked "why is there sneezing and buzzing when Thérèse delivers her monologue about feminism?" I understand why students in language learning would be confused with contextual references to historical events or complex play with language on a very advanced level of modernist poetics. Yet the dynamic between monologue and sound effect struck me as a point of interest. This confusion offered to me as director paths of inquiry concerning the function and interplay of textual modes in

[24] For an in depth analysis on the connection between the drama and these ideas, structures, and events, consult Peter Read's thorough work *Apollinaire et Les Mamelles de Tirésias. La revanche d'Eros.*

drama, specifically the differences and tensions between dialogic and didascalic written language. Apollinaire's extensive use of didascalie taught me to read the mode as a poetic form, because in his work it offers symbolic meaning outside of its traditional purpose that is meant to give material support to the diegesis. In the drama, the stage directions, that determine sound effects, props, and costume, often contrast the spoken discourses of the characters. In doing so, the directions deliberately interrupt or undermine these discourses, or are used to bolster opposition to these discourses, thus creating tensions within the text. This idea raised the question: isn't this action the very definition of activism, that is a field of action to use the system against itself, or undermining discourses with modes that were once used for support? Since the drama is so heavily charged with radical thought and contextual references to war, revolution, political events, and the contemporary art scene, my role as director motivated me to infuse socio-political commentary. I found that the more suitable mode to express a contemporary voice of political provocation was not the performed lyric of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. The activism of a democratic disruption - related to Rancière's "mute speech" – is found in the mode of stage direction in the drama.

The mute but not silent 'prop'--an expression for theatrical property--can express contemporary sociopolitical issues, even as silent objects. For example, in the 2015 production, instead of rubber balls thrown at the crowd in the final scene, we employed plastic Easter eggs purchased from a hypermarket. This choice was meant to hit the audience with a reference to contemporary American capitalism exploiting religious ritual. For another example of a symbolic, and thus poetic, use for the props, when

Thérèse returns in the second act dressed as a gypsy fortuneteller, the actress pulled off the headscarf in an exaggerated gesture to reveal the character's return. This action also referred to the religious and political situation involving the Islamic headscarf in France. Digital effects from a laptop created the disorienting soundscape that interrupts monologues of power. Politically active artists, such as Stromae and Beyoncé, replaced Erik Satie's *ballet russe* inspired score. I replaced the talking *kiosque* of journalistic media with computer projection on a screen depicting various pop culture memes and tweets. All in all, the confusing language and the content of the drama remained unchanged, but the props, still corresponding to Apollinaire's didascalic instructions, offered the poetics. This method established a 'use of language' in stage direction to voice contemporary sociopolitical expression.

However, with no recording of the performance, it is lost, having been ephemerally given to that specific weekend in April 2015. Yet the text endures and the directions continue to speak through each reading of the mute-loquacious letter. In this chapter, I examine the poetics of stage direction off the stage and in the text. I explore Apollinaire's didascalie in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* as a poetic space that gives presence to his aesthetico-political theory: the *esprit nouveau*. I argue that his innovation to the didascalic form --his “Poetics of Props”--is an aesthetic activism in which the dynamics of theatrical text, specifically between didascalic and dialogic modes, work to critique contemporary discourses of power. His poetics employ the material conditions of drama to convey tenets of aesthetico-political theory that opposes the discourses of power he views as threats to the French nation. An analysis of his stage directions offers an

understanding of the poetic potential of didascalie, and alternative perspectives to expressing sociopolitical concerns through the modes of textual drama. His abundant use of theatrical property, especially in reference to the bodies of the characters, renders the body as a prop subservient to the drama and the system. The characters' dynamic on stage becomes loaded with meaning emblematic of the *esprit nouveau* that Apollinaire hopes will reinvigorate war-torn France.

To complete this study, it is necessary to construct a concrete definition of Apollinaire's theory--the *esprit nouveau*--and his innovation to theatrical form: the *drame surréaliste*. The definitions of these key terms are constructed through compiling Apollinaire's ideas from essays, interviews, and critical reviews between 1916-1918 as well as contemporary scholarship. In the subsequent section, through close readings of the didascalie, I determine how his poetics of props function to give presence to different aspects of the *esprit nouveau*. Through the aesthetics of theatrical property - appearance, sound, gesture - Apollinaire is able to connect the mute prop – balloon, rubber balls, costuming, domestic object, sound effect – and the gendered body of the character for an expressive purpose. Through focusing on the use of the gendered body as prop, one becomes aware of a transition of the body, often through staging violence. This theme of transition relates to the *esprit nouveau* theory that seeks renewal at the levels of the people, the nation, and poetics. In the last section of this chapter, I elaborate Apollinaire's desire for transition of both art and society from states of victimization to liberation. To do this, I navigate Apollinaire's textual staging of the gendered body, and specifically the female body, as a literary property from his early pornographic prose to his 1917 drama. I

determine a transition for his work, and for aesthetics in a larger sense, from modernist victimization to aesthetic activism of the *esprit nouveau*. By staging aesthetico-political theory through the poetics of props, or his *esprit nouveau* through his *drame surréaliste*, Apollinaire grounds his activism in the material conditions of drama. His method makes a reader/spectator effectively "feel"[25] his theory. This raises the stakes for his textual drama because, through close readings, we can understand how Apollinaire uses poetic innovation of mute speech to express aesthetico-political theory.

The *Esprit nouveau* and the *Drame surréaliste*

In 1916, while recovering from a shrapnel wound suffered at the war front, Apollinaire gave an interview to Pierre Albert-Birot, editor of the revue *Son Image Couleur (SIC)* and producer/publisher of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. In the interview, Albert-Birot seeks to present Apollinaire's "idées générales sur l'état actuel du mouvement littéraire d'avant-garde" (Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose,* 2, 985)[26] to better understand, what Gaston Picard calls "cet esprit nouveau qu'animent Guillaume Apollinaire et ses amis" (988). He asks Apollinaire how the war would affect literature. The poet-soldier answers "on ne fera plus de littérature désintéressée" (987). For Apollinaire, the purpose of literature was no longer for the disinterested experience of

[25] The theatrical property of touch is surely more felt during performance, but can also become an abstract touch through the reader imagining being hit with rubber balls.
[26] For the remainder of this chapter, I will use '*OP*' for *Œuvres Poétiques* and 'OProse' for the volumes of *Œuvres en prose complètes*.

beauty as *belles lettres*,[27] but one that is interested and seeks to rebuild France after the Great War. For Apollinaire, the experience of literature can indeed influence society, as Peter Read states "aux yeux d'Apollinaire l'esthétique est capable de marquer l'éthique des âmes et des institutions" (Read, 140). This idea of the aesthetic experience, as an ethical intermediary between the individual and the nation, is central to Apollinaire's theory and practice that I read as aesthetic activism. In this section, I define his theory in order to read how his drama works to give presence to his ideas. It is necessary to differentiate between the key terms *esprit nouveau* and *surréaliste* that work together in Apollinaire's theoretical essays to define different aspects of his aesthetic system that is at once poetical and political. There is a clear distinction between the terms: in short, the *esprit nouveau* is the theory and *surréalisme* is the praxis.

Cocteau's Parade and L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes

The terms first appear together in the *Programme* that Apollinaire wrote for Jean Cocteau's ballet-russe *Parade* in 1917. The text was initially entitled "Les spectacles modernistes des Ballets russes – *Parade* et l'Esprit nouveau" and published in the *Excelsior* a week prior to the premiere of the ballet. From the original title of the essay, it is clear that Apollinaire views *Parade* as a part of the *esprit nouveau* aesthetic that seeks

[27] This creates a link with Rancière who sees the *belles lettres* as part of the representative regime founded on hierarchies and principles. He includes romantisme in this representative regime, while he views the nineteenth century novel as defining new poetics of expression and the aesthetic regime. We find a similar expression of a difference in poetics in this essay. Apollinaire views his work as different from the snobisme romantique. His aesthetic is for a poetics of expression that is interested in the material world, rather than a disinterested representation of beauty.

to challenge dramatic conventions that he describes as “le snobisme romantique” (*Oprose2,* 867). Apollinaire declares *Parade* as a “poème scénique” that is “le signe de l'avènement d'un art plus complet” (865). He sees *Parade* as a synthesis of arts that results in “une sorte de sur-réalisme où je vois le point de départ d'une série de manifestations de cet esprit nouveau” (865). Here we get a sense of how Apollinaire employs these two terms. *Sur-réalisme* is a form of 'stage poetics' and thus an early definition of a didascalic poetic that employs an array of aesthetic experience including music, lyric drama, choreography and visual effect of costume and set design. If the term *sur-réalisme* is used to define the certain type of stage poetics he envisions, *cet esprit nouveau* is then an overarching aesthetic theory, or method, developed during the series of *manifestations*. This comparison of the terms offers a more complex aesthetic agenda infused with a political and social investment of an ethically interested, post-war expression, presented to the public through the term *manifestations*. This series of events is comprised of works like *Parade*, the *Calligrammes*[28], *Le Poète Assassiné*, and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* as well as cubist art. We can understand the *esprit nouveau* as an aesthetic that challenges the contemporary horizon of expectation across genres: ballet, verse poetry, prose, visual arts and drama. For Apollinaire, the method seeks innovations

[28] In *Calligrammes* the poem "La Jolie rousse" corresponds to the dynamics and tenets of the *esprit nouveau*. For example, the poet presents themselves in front of a public "devant tous" similarly to the director in the prologue of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. This theatricalises the poem, but also gives presence to the communicative quality of the text that is meant to inform. The poet invokes the horrors and trauma of the war, the conflicts between aesthetic traditions and innovation, while also declaring the duty of the poet to mainting order. The poet also seeks to witness and offer new forms "Il y a là des feux nouveaux des couleurs jamais vues" (*OP*, 323) perhaps indicative of the visually constructed *Calligrammes* like "La Colombe poignardée et le Jet d'eau." As *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* is in dialogue with theatrical traditions and innovations, "La Jolie rousse" evokes the poetic past, while offering a future oriented vision for what poetics can do in Post-war France.

to traditional forms and a plurality of sense experience in order to produce socially interested works.

The conference paper "L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes" is another text of the series of *manifestations* written in 1917 and intended for public reading during a conference managed by the SIC revue at the *Vieux Colombier* theater.[29] In the conference paper, Apollinaire outlines the various levels of the *esprit nouveau* movement. First, there is the duty ("ordre et devoir") of the poet to the nation to orchestrate the new poetic as an expression of sociopolitical concern ("une expression particulère et lyrique de la nation française") (*Oprose2*, 946). As in the *Parade* essay, the theory employs a plurality of genres and forms such as various literary modes, music, dance, graphics arts, and what Apollinaire calls "[une] synthèse des arts" (946). The poet's main tool are feelings such as "la surprise" (949) as well as "le rire et le ridicule" (948). What Apollinaire means is that the new poetics should produce feelings like surprise, and bodily responses like laughter, for the specific purpose of conveying socially concerned ideas. He also says that an idea or a truth can influence the feeling of surprise as well. He makes a reference to *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and its main theme: "les femmes ne faisant point d'enfants, les hommes pourraient en faire . . . j'exprime une vérité littéraire qui ne pourra être qualifié de fable que hors de la littérature, et je détermine la surprise" (950). I read this reference to the main theme of the drama not just as a 'plug' for his play, but a reference to his aesthetic system that employs the material conditions of stage direction to influence feelings like surprise and laughter. He confirms the importance of surprise to his theory

[29] For more information on the conference, the essay, and its themes, aesthetic, and reception see Margareth Wijk *Guillaume Apollinaire et L'esprit nouveau.*

and practice that he views as innovative when he claims “C’est par la surprise . . . que l’esprit nouveau se distingue de tous les mouvements artistiques et littéraires qui l’ont précédé” (949). His theory challenges traditional forms to offer a new aesthetic. However, the *esprit nouveau* is based in the *bon sens* of tradition but has a future oriented scope to become prophesy (950). Overall, the new poetic is for the activist purpose of “renouvellement de nous-mêmes” (952).

In *Guillaume Apollinaire et L'esprit Nouveau*, Margaret Wijk presents a detailed description of the conference as well as the term *esprit nouveau*, tracing its use through several texts to conclude "nous pourrions dire que l'étude de la genèse de l'expression “esprit nouveau” prouve que ce concept ne se rattache pas seulement à l'art moderne . . . mais aussi à la morale et aux responsabilités sociales. . . . l'artiste doit se mettre au service de la société" (59-60). Following her description, we can summarize the *esprit nouveau* aesthetic movement as not simply modern art, but an engagement with the moral structures that govern society, traditional artistic forms, and individual responsibility. As Apollinaire states clearly, and Wijk agrees, the *esprit nouveau* aesthetic conveys the message that the artist uses their work in service to the nation. Via close readings of the drama, we see how all these elements are conveyed to the reader via the poetics of props and the dynamics of the texts. Before turning to the drama though, it is necessary to first approach the préface and the prologue that set certain conditions for the drama, indicative of a didascalic text.

La Préface and le drame surréaliste

In terms of the praxis that corresponds to the theory, Apollinaire offers a *poème scènique*, further defined as a *drame sur-realiste,* in the preface to *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* published by Pierre Albert-Birot and Éditions SIC in January 1918, about six months after the performance. Peter Read describes the preface as a "proclamation théorique assez rare chez Apollinaire, qui lui permet de définir son esthétique anti-naturaliste et souligner l'originalité de son drame surréaliste" (219). The editors of his complete works define the form of *surréalisme* as "une création de l'imagination fondée sur une expérience du réel. Il est une manifestation de ce qu'il appelle alors l'Esprit nouveau" (*Oprose2*, 1649). The surrealist drama is the form in which the *esprit nouveau* theory can manifest as an experience of the real through poetic creation and the aesthetics of drama. Apollinaire states in the preface that the purpose of the work is to "intéresser et amuser," which reinforces his earlier description of post-war art that is interested in society, yet offers nationalistic discourse through humor and entertainment rather than the manifesto. The drama is purposeful and its message is not to imitate nature or just to please, but to inform the public about the main theme of rebuilding the nation through repopulation: "on ne fait plus d'enfants en France parce qu'on n'y fait pas assez l'amour" (*OP,* 868).

The dramatist voices a political discourse: "c'est au gouvernants à agir, à faciliter les mariages, à encourager l'amour fécond" (868). He details the type of aesthetic experience that he seeks to work alongside his political discourse: "cet art sera moderne, simple, rapide avec les raccourcis ou les grossissements qui s'imposent si l'on veut

frapper le spectateur" (868) in order to have an "influence sur les esprits et sur les mœurs dans le sens du devoir et de l'honneur" (868). The surrealist drama is modern art in action as a fast and intense sensory experience. It is meant to "hit" the audience via an aesthetic system of staged poetics in order to influence their morals by instilling a sense of duty and honor relative to the nation indicative of the *esprit nouveau*. Even though he envisions a new poetics of the stage and a synthesis of arts, the work needs to be grounded in traditional forms. Apollinaire states that his innovations work with traditions of comedy, drama, farce, fable and *l'art populaire,* thus within a cultural and historical framework. This necessity for tradition further grounds the work in relation to culture and society, and thus a political as well as poetical use: "J'ai écrit mon drame surréaliste avant tout pour les Français comme Aristophane composait ses comédies pour les Athéniens" (867). As we begin to sort through the essays, we can understand that the innovation of theatrical form--the didascalic poetics--seeks to influence sense experience needed to transfer the idea of repopulation to the public. In turn this is purposeful to inform them of their social duty to rebuild the nation through not only making more love for pleasure, but to influence socio-political structures like the *gouvernants*. We understand the blurring of lines between innovations at the levels of poetics and politics, as well as the symbiotic relation between the *esprit nouveau* and the drama.

Prologue, la scène unique

Certain tenets of the theory, detailed in the preface and the essays, are given presence via poetic devices and rhetorical structures of verse in the staged prologue, the *scène unique* that opens the drama. Since the prologue exists outside of the narrative of the drama, we can read it as a didascalie because it sets time and place, as well as offers instructions concerning the performance. Moreover, since the monologue is written as a free verse poem, it is thus an early example of a didascalic poetic. The character who delivers the monologue is labeled as the director and speaks to the audience about their purpose in the drama, thus establishing the extra-diegetic dynamic between performance and audience. The character is also a wounded soldier carrying *une canne de tranchée*. The mute prop establishes the context as the Great War, thus offering the drama as a response, even though, as we will see, the drama is supposedly set in Zanzibar. In this way, via the didascalic properties of the prologue, the audience understands from the beginning that the drama, although set in Zanzibar, is also situated vis-à-vis contemporary France, ravaged by war but hopeful for change. The aesthetic theory is present as the director states "On tente ici d'infuser un esprit nouveau au théâtre" (881). This is accomplished through "mariant souvent sans lien apparent comme dans la vie les sons les gestes les couleurs les cris les bruits la musique la danse l'acrobatie la poésie la peinture" (881). In this way, the character of the director, who is also a wounded soldier (perhaps Apollinaire himself), speaks to the audience about the aesthetico-political theory and the poetic form. The prologue stages the main message outlined in the preface that the theatrical properties of drama can affect the real experience of feelings like surprise and humor to reinvigorate poetics for the purpose of an *esprit nouveau*. In the Prologue,

and thus at the beginning of the drama, the reader gains an understanding of how the poetics of the drama are about more than staged representation. They express a theory related to the function of theater and poetics in post-war France.

Aesthetico-Political poetics

We can read these paratexts, essays, prefaces, and prologues, as a complete didascalie on which he situates his drama. The total works combine elements including the politics of individual duty, a synthesis of arts on the theatrical stage and dramatic text, the sensations of surprise and humor that work to convey the theory and the theme of repopulation through sense experience, all framed by a future oriented lens of prophecy. The main theme represents a national crisis rendering the role of women and men, and thus the gendered body, as crucial to solving the problem of depopulation and influencing rebirth. The *esprit nouveau* as manifested in the *drame surréaliste* is not art for art's sake or modernist art for critique of form. It is almost an *epopée* for the renewal of the nation and the reestablishment of a people, that he sees as the next step in the French poetic tradition: “l'esprit nouveau qui dominera le monde entier ne s'est fait jour dans la poésie nulle part comme en France” (*Oprose2,* 944). Apollinaire continues “[l]es poètes modernes sont donc des créateurs, des inventeurs, et des prophètes; ils demandent qu'on examine ce qu'ils disent pour le plus grand bien de la collectivité” (952). We can read his theory then as defining the poet as no longer an entertainer, but rather an activist with a moral duty to assist the innovation of arts and the rebuilding of society. Poets, and their

work, are useful--“leurs recherches seront utiles” (948)--because they can influence the public via new sensations to promote love and repopulation. This theme of repopulation can be read figuratively as a call for a joining together, a peace, and a dialogue for the purpose of creation and rebuilding on numerous levels including the family, the social body, the political establishment and aesthetic innovation.

Even though the *esprit nouveau* incorporates all genres in the synthesis of arts, drama--the *poème scénique*--is the key form for his theory because it can achieve an expression of the real through its material conditions of stage direction. This raises the stakes for a reading focused on the didascalie in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* to understand what Apollinaire seeks to achieve with his activism and how he implements it in the text. In Apollinaire's work, the *esprit nouveau* is transferred to the audience through the “exercice du sens” that involves the material conditions of stage direction. Willard Bohn indicates in his book *Apollinaire on the edge* that the surrealist drama is “a serious attack on theater” (106) meant to “violate the audience's expectations” (109). Bohn sums up, to concur with Apollinaire, that an example of a means to achieve this violation of expectation is through "the reversal of gender roles” (109). In the next section I analyze in detail how Apollinaire uses stage direction to establish gender reversal, not only in role, but also in body. This reversal is not only an attack on theater and the audience, as Bohn claims, but also on discourses of power, voiced by his characters who establish the dynamic of the “crux of the play” (109) that is also central to his surrealist aesthetic “that exploits two principles: surprise and analogy” (109). In this way, the staging of the transition of the gendered body is crucial to an understanding of his theory and praxis.

Reading Apollinaire's Poetics of Props

In this section, I analyze the stage directions in the drama to determine how Apollinaire employs a poetics of props to express gender reversal and its correspondence to disruptions of discourse. The analysis focuses on the use of theatrical properties including sound, appearance, gesture, and material object. These props create tensions in the text between the languages and meanings of didascalic and dialogic modes. This tension undermines discourses of power spoken by the characters to convey sociopolitical expression related to *esprit nouveau*. In order for his method of innovation to be successful, Apollinaire needs to disrupt power structures, as we will see in the text, specifically patriarchal, heroic and theatrical traditions. Traditional forms are necessary to the *esprit nouveau* activism because the theory needs an already existing platform on which to work and juxtapose the innovations. The reasoning of the past helps to guide innovations as he states: "De la connaissance du passé il naît la raison, de la vision de l'avenir surgit l'audace et la prévoyance." (*Oprose2*, 986). In order for the future oriented scope of the *esprit nouveau* to innovate form, there must be a traditional form to change through "audace." This is why he looks to the didascalie as the space for innovation. The first stage direction in the text shows that Apollinaire uses conventions of drama. It presents to the reader a traditional, standard set up of space and time. In other words, for his innovations to work, he needs to start with a base that everyone can understand, and thus a traditional didascalie that presents space, time, character, and material object.

Although the didascalie is traditional in its intent, it is amplified to contrast the reader's existing understanding of stage direction:

> *La place du marché de Zanzibar, le matin. Le décor représente des maisons, une échappée sur le port et aussi ce qui peut évoquer aux Français l'idée du jeu de zanzibar. Un mégaphone en forme de cornet à dès et orné de dès est sur le devant de la scène. Du côté cour, entrée d'une maison; du côté jardin, un kiosque de journaux avec une nombreuse marchandise. . . . Au fond, le personnage collectif et muet qui représente le peuple de Zanzibar est présent dès le lever du rideau. […] Tous les bruits indiqués comme devant être produits au moyen d'un instrument sont menés par le peuple de Zanzibar.* (*Œuvres poétiques,* 883)

The introductory didascalie merits an analysis on three levels: how it presents to the reader the symbolic, or poetic, purpose of the directorial word; the purpose of the spatial design; and the presence of the "collective and mute" character of "Le Peuple de Zanzibar." Even though the story takes place in Zanzibar, Apollinaire is clear in stating that this term is open to interpretation because the setting of Zanzibar is meant to evoke the idea ("évoquer une idée") of a dice game also called zanzibar. Willard Bohn agrees "the set depicts both at the same time" (114). The material aspects of stage direction take on a symbolic function meant to evoke a separate idea from the setting that is the island of Zanzibar, to also include the game of chance. Multiple meanings then exist in the staging of the setting as "Zanzibar," thus offering an example of a poetic device in the stage direction--metonymy--where meaning is contiguous in the term "Zanzibar" as island and game. Through the didascalie, Apollinaire speaks to his reader to make it clear from the beginning that this drama is not traditional theater where the didascalie is used for representation. He wants to establish his drama as a game, a challenge to his reader with a specific intent and purpose of expressing a message to the French people. The dual setting that is both island and dice game destabilizes the reader by making the foundation

of the story as a far away island and a game of chance. Furthermore, this contrasts the Prologue that seems to situate the drama in war torn France. This confusion is purposeful to challenge the understandings of the reader, and make them realize that this is not traditional poetics of representation, but a new poetics of expression.

Secondly, in terms of material set design, there is a merging of spaces including the domestic ("maison,") the economic ("marché,") the exotic ("Zanzibar,") the extra-diegetic ("côté cour,") ("côté jardin,") and the mediatic ("kiosque,") and ("journaux.") Serge Férat's painting, used as the backdrop for the performance and included in the first publication of the drama, reinforces this idea of a merging of space to form a cubist[30] concept of dramatic staging, where all angles are present to construct a total view of the object (Image). Apollinaire's stage direction further pluralizes setting as not just France, island and game of chance, but also contemporary spaces of theater, home, media, and market. All these sides to the story become present and perceptible to the reader like the various sides and angles of a guitar in cubist painting. If staging is meant to support the diegesis, then in this way, the private house merges with the market, the press, and the port to create a hybrid space upon which domestic, public, and international discourses are connected in a network of communication. With the public spaces of the market and the media as an equal part of the stage, Apollinaire makes domestic privacy, and more importantly, the intimacy of marriage, public and communicative through the mediatic

[30]The cubist aesthetic is part of Apollinaire's series of manifestation that he claims to be emblematic of the *esprit nouveau*. However, some cubist painters did not like the association between the absurd theater and their aesthetic. The play actually angered the cubists resulting in "an angry polemic between Apollinaire and some of the Cubist painters, who publicly distanced themselves from the play" (Bohn, 106). For more information on cubism in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* see Peter Read's chapter "'Prenez garde à la peinture': le Tribunal cubiste" (203 - 219).

quality of the *kiosque*. By taking the interior of the household outside into the public sphere, Apollinaire stages an inside to outside transition. This staging reinforces his assertion in the essays that what goes on inside the home, in terms of lovemaking and repopulation, affects the outside public space. From the extra-diegetic perspective, the inside to outside shift means that what happens inside the theater, or the theatrical text, will also affect the outside in society. In the first didascalie, Apollinaire exhibits his theory that poetic innovation, in this case a cubist set design, can raise commentary on sociopolitical context. In other words, in the first space of directorial command, Apollinaire offers his system to the reader. The characters, the dramatic modes in text, the public, the story, and the real world are all different angles, different sides of the same dice thrown in the game of chance. The question then to consider while reading the drama is whether we as a community are going to win or lose. This feeling of anticipation hints at the importance of surprise for the drama.

Thirdly, the reader is introduced to the character of the People of Zanzibar: "le personnage collectif et muet qui représente le peuple de Zanzibar est présent dès le lever du rideau." The character is omnipresent on stage throughout the drama and not only controls the sound design, through the use of musical instruments indicated in the stage direction, but who function as a continual witness to events. The character is described as “collectif et muet” intended to represent the collective body of a people, like the chorus in traditional theater. The muteness recalls the concept of mute speech that has the ability to disrupt discourses in its essence of mute-loquaciousness. Rancière's concept helps to develop the meaning of this character that, according to the stage direction, is mute but

not silent. The People of Zanzibar uses sound effects, determined in the didascalie, to disrupt the discourses of the characters and the reading of the drama. In this way, I read the People of Zanzibar as a figure for the purpose of the "didascalie" that is meant to be collective, or omnipresent, (like the chorus of traditional drama) although lyrically mute, but with an expressive power to disrupt discourse through theatrical properties of sound and material object in the didascalie. The People of Zanzibar, who speaks a didascalic language of sound and instrument, is meant to evoke the idea of the democratic disruption of the people via "tous les bruits." In this first stage direction, Apollinaire offers the People of Zanzibar as a figure through which the audience can understand the function of the stage directions as a disruptor. Furthermore, the omnipresence of the character, which silently observes the drama, parallels the presence of the reader/spectator. Through this association, Apollinaire intends that his audience share the mute speech power of a "mute but not silent" force for democratic disruption of dominant discourses outside of the theater in the real world.

Thérèse's transition

The introductory stage direction establishes the drama as a game and a challenge to the reader, a hybrid space, and a system of mute speech poetics. With this first didascalie, Apollinaire offers the reader a frame through which to read the subsequent stage directions. These three components--challenge, hybrid space, and mute poetics--are reflected in the form of the drama, and specifically the dynamics between the dialogic

and didascalic modes. In order to understand how these dynamics influence a mute poetics to challenge discourses of power, we can analyze the interaction between the modes. As scene 1 begins, Thérèse is introduced: "*visage bleu, longue robe bleue orné de singes et de fruits peints*" (*Œuvres Poétiques,* 883). Even before she speaks, her body, defined along the theatrical property of costume and appearance, is characterized as an 'other' figure by a blue face and a blue dress detailed with fruit and monkeys. We can read the painted fruit as a reference to the theme of procreation that Apollinaire describes throughout the paratextual essays as the focus of the drama. Also, the 'fruit of the womb' symbolically woven into the fabric of her dress signifies the familiar inside to outside system of transition that continues throughout the drama. Associated in the first scene with the gendered body, the prop of costume creates tension between didascalic description--the dress ornamented with fruit--and lyrical content: her discourse of feminist empowerment.[31] This tension establishes her as a powerful figure, reinforced by didascalic action: "*elle cherche à dominer le tumulte de l'orchestre*" (883). She seeks to dominate the narrative, but also the extra-diegetic elements of the performance that include the sounds of the *orchestra*. Her monologue establishes the intrigue of the plot as she exposes to the exterior, through lyric, the denial of the interior workings of her reproductive system. The lyric reads:

[31] In the section of his chapter entitled "Repopulation and feminism," Bohn evaluates the historical context of both themes to state "by 1917, feminism and repopulation had received widespread publicity and were constantly in the newspapers. Although both movements had been gathering momentum for years, they acquired a sense of urgency during the First World War (117). For further information about feminism and the historical context of the drama consult Peter Read's chapter "Mutineries et grèves de femmes" (15 - 23).

> Non monsieur mon mari vous ne me ferez pas faire ce que vous voulez *Chuintement* Je suis féministe et je ne reconnais pas l'autorité de l'homme *Chuintement* . . . je veux faire la guerre – *Tonnerre* - et ne pas faire des enfants. (884)

The theatrical property of sound indicated by thunder ("*Tonnerre*") and buzzing ("chuintement") works with the performed lyric to create a poetic association of menace and interruption directed at The Husband, whose only line in this scene is a command for commodity: "donnez-moi du lard je te dis" (884). The thunder gives a material presence to her declaration of war on gender role as producer of commodity, whether child or lard. The sound marks tension for the reader between her "fruit of the womb" appearance and her empowered discourse, while also enhancing her menace in the context of traditional patriarchal power. In this first instance, the didascalic prop supports the lyric to bolster its meaning through sound effect. This menace of thunder is associated with her power discourse that rages against childbirth and seeks the dissolution of patriarchal command.

In this first scene of challenge to authority, as represented in the text, Apollinaire situates didascalic sound effects concurrently with the delivery of her lines. The sounds are detailed in stage directions as sneezing ("*éternuement*") and cackling ("*caquetage*"). For example, the sneezing scene alluded to in the introduction to this chapter is situated thusly:

> Vous l'entendez il ne pense qu'à l'amour
>
> *Elle a une crise de nerfs*
>
> Mais tu ne te doutes pas imbécile
>
> *Éternuement*
>
> Qu'après avoir été soldat je veux être artiste
>
> *Éternuement*
>
> Parfaitement Parfaitement
>
> *Éternuement* (*OP, 884*)

As she finishes her monologue there is a tumult of these sound effects that ends with Thérèse making the sound of a train "*Éternuement caquetage, après quoi elle imite bruit du chemin de fer*" (885). Textually speaking, there is juxtaposition between lyric on the left and didascalic on the right. This creates a disruption of the reading of her power discourse by making the reader's eye move back and forth on the page. This disorients the reader, and therefore, the reader's awareness of her discourse. Furthermore, it gives visual presence to opposition and conflict between the modes. The sound effects then are used to challenge both the characters' discourses of power and the reader's understanding and perspective of the text. In this way, the tension between stage direction sound and dialogic discourse renders the page as a field of action between the modes of lyric and didascalic.

Beyond the textual layout, there is also symbolic meaning conveyed via the sound effects. The disruption of discourse with sneezing, buzzing, and cackling renders her, and what she represents, as ridiculous, but also dangerous. The sneezing and cackling suggest that her radical desire to change her identity stems from sickness, both physical and mental. Moreover, the buzzing and the train sound signify technology, energy and momentum, rendering her 'sickness' as something viral that could spread, like the railroad, across the country to infect others with the revolutionary discourse. The potential for infection by her message, which opposes her husband's appetite for commodities ("du lard"), not only interrupts feeding, but also denies sex for procreation. It seems here that Apollinaire is undermining her desire for liberation because of its effect on the overall theme of repopulation that is the main message of the *esprit nouveau*.

Scholars have argued for an understanding of the drama as an anti-feminist play. Bohn questions this in his reading of the "unsympathetically" viewed passion of Thérèse for feminist liberation (118). Barbara Lekatsas calls the play "an attack on the suffrage movement and feminism" (9) while Scott Bates claims the drama reflects the "fundamental male chauvinism of the play's author" (35, 40). Whether or not Apollinaire critiques or undermines the feminist movement during the Great War in France is not the intended focus of this chapter. The textual reading is concerned with the form of his poetic that creates tension between lyric discourse and didascalic props. Even though her discourse is destabilized, her body transitions from flesh to prop in order to convey her revolutionary power, and more importantly, the innovative power of the poetics of props and the didascalic mode.

This transition, one of the hallmarks of the drama, is determined in the stage directions. The rising and exploding balloons of Thérèse's breasts become symbolically loaded with meaning on numerous levels to enhance the poetics of props. The stage direction reads: "*Elle pousse un grand cri et entr'ouvre sa blouse dont il en sort ses mamelles, l'une rouge l'autre bleue et comme elle les lâche, elles s'envolent, ballons d'enfant*" (885). The prop of her dress, painted with fruit, represents her subservient position to her husband, and to the nation in a larger sense. When her breasts are contained within the dress she becomes a commodity like fruit, lard, or cattle that produce milk to raise the nation's children, also produced by her womb. When she opens the dress and shouts, sound and costume combine as theatrical property to signify the overthrow of her objectification. Even though she frees herself from her husband's

command, she is still bound to the republic as the red and blue balloon props that represent her breasts also signify the flag[32] and are still connected to her body by a string. In this way, the strings that connect her body to her balloon-breasts are imbued with significance concerning her bound posture vis-à-vis the Republic. The breast scene is the *esprit nouveau* in action as it stages surprise and humor to provoke of critique of sociopolitical issues, specifically, the situation of women in Great War era France. Yet it is not just her discourse of empowerment that determines her revolutionary posture. Thérèse releases herself from a state of servitude and objectification through her release of the props. She confirms the weakness of her situation, but hints at the possibility of flight from such a situation when she commands the prop balloon breasts to "envolez-vous oiseaux de ma faiblesse"[33] (885). Apollinaire uses both didascalic language and lyric poetry to create a transcendent, dramatic figure. This scene is also important for the movement of the plot as the explosion of the balloon breasts transform her into a man. Her transformation, a didascalic *coup de théâtre*, is brought into material presence for the reader-spectator to "feel" when the balloons explode: "*elle allume un briquet et les fait exploser*" (886). This stage direction is written in alexandrine form. In this way, Apollinaire is using the prop to explode traditional poetic form, and signify a transition for poetics, embodied in the transition of gender. The stage directions establish her character as an agent of destruction and transition. With the prop of the exploding balloons, Apollinaire stages the intrigue detailed throughout the rest of the drama: the

[32] As Bohn indicates "Separated by an expanse of white skin, the briefly evoke the French flag" (115).
[33] This line is repeated at the end of the drama, and thus takes on a significance of a refrain to further establish the drama as a poetic piece in its entirety.

transition from object to subject and from fecund woman to sterile "man." In this way, the exploding balloons shock the audience/reader with the sensation of surprise that is one of the main tenets.

Since she is now a man, Thérèse announces her new name to redefine herself: "Je porterai désormais un nom d'homme: Tirésias" (888). In conjunction with her lyric of redefinition, the stage directions establish her as a man through appearance: "*Elle caresse sa barbe et retrousse sa moustache qui ont brusquement poussé*" (886). Her transition to a man is not just in words, but is materially established via the properties of the didascalie. The material essence of the props also adds to her body, increasing her strength as she attacks the husband and bests him: "*Ils se battent, elle a raison de lui*" (887). Her transition continues, as the focus of the didascalie moves from sound to material object to reinforce changes to her body, as well as strengthen the poetic link between the prop and the body. For example, she throws domestic objects outside of the house through the window: "*Elle jette successivement par la fenêtre un pot de chambre, un bassin, et un urinal*" (888). Not only does this reinforce the inside to outside method of transition, but also this action continues the association of gendered body with prop, not in sound as the sneezing and cackling, but through material object. The domestic objects of the chamber pot and the urinal evoke the idea of emptying the body, while the bassin is for cleaning, or maybe, cleansing the body. I interpret this emptying and cleansing of the body to be related to the language in the text, specifically her name Thérèse, where she intends to cleanse her identity through emptying domestic meaning.

The Husband plays a part in this game as well, as he uses the wrong terms to describe the domestic objects:

> Le piano
> *Il ramasse l'urinal*
> Le violon
> *Il ramasse le bassin*. (888)

One reads his expression of piano but then reads the object of the urinal. This difference enhances the tension between the modes of lyric and didascalic to mimic the battle between husband and wife. The incoherency of meaning is also related to influencing the feeling of surprise, as Bohn indicates, "Apollinaire subjects the audience to a constant barrage of nonsense . . . Surprise, justifies all the incoherencies and succeeds in unifying the whole" (114). This tension and conflict works to further undermine meaning and empty significance from language, but also support the aesthetic that seeks to convey the message of repopulation through the feeling of surprise. In short, through his poetics of props Apollinaire stages an emptying of meaning from language. In doing so, words like "Thérèse," can then be redefined. This redefinition and transition to a new meaning and identity is confirmed as she expresses her new name: "je porterai un nom d'homme: Tirésias!"

The gender transition continues in the stage directions of Act 1 Scene 4, with an aesthetic of violence. The *didascalie* reads:

> *Tirésias revient avec des vêtements, une corde, des objets hétéroclites. Elle jette tout, se précipite sur le mari. Sur la dernière réplique du mari, Presto et Lacouf armés de brownings en carton sont sortis gravement de dessous la scène et s'avancent dans la salle, cependant que Tirésias, maitrisant son mari, lui ôte son pantalon, se déshabille, lui passe sa jupe, le ligote, se pantalonne, se coupe les cheveux et met un chapeau haut de forme. Ce jeu de scène dure jusqu'au premier coup de revolver*. (888)

Thérèse is officially redefined in the staging as Tirésias, to complete her transformation and give material support to the name Tirésias, who returns to the scene with new props. These material objects are no longer for emptying, like the urinal and chamber pot of the previous scene. They are objects that bind, like rope and clothing, to make a reference to her previous position as housewife, bound to the command of husband and Republic. Through the poetics of props, Apollinaire redefines the sign during the drama by removing the previous meaning bound to the term "Thérèse." She then imposes the rope and the skirt onto the husband to violently restrain him. Feminist Thérèse, now revolutionary soldier Tirésias,[34] attacks the husband to transfer the binding objects onto his body and transform him into a domesticated woman, bound and objectified to her command.

In this extensive stage direction, the cardboard revolvers of the comedic duelists Presto and Lacouf, the gunshots, the physical mastering of the husband, and Thérèse's violent cutting of her hair, all create an aesthetic of violence. This violent tableau enhances the aesthetic shock of the gender transition and augments Tirésias's destructive nature. Yet through the ideal of rebirth inherent in the *esprit nouveau*, we can read this transition not as mere destruction, but as violence for change, a challenge to command, and a force of action. Tirésias exits the scene to engage in acts of heroism, like violent

[34] In *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, prophecy is evident by the title. Tirésias was the blind prophet in Sophocles' Theban tragedy cycle. The renewal of the traditional text plays an important role in the success of the activism. He is the prophet of the Theban trilogy who knows the full story and guides the narrative. But also, Tiresias is present in mythology, especially the tale of his attack on the copulating snakes and his subsequent punishment of gender reversal. This attack on copulation is then central to Thérèse's gender reversal. So, like the Tirésias myth, we view her gender transition as the result of her attack on copulation through her feminist drive to fight as a soldier. But like the myth, Tirésias undergoes another gender reversal to return to a woman.

revolution and sexual conquest that penetrate the narrative through staged information exchanges like crowd noise, journalism or telegrams. These information exchanges are mostly expressed in the textual mode of the didascalie, thus further enhancing the communicative function of the mode. Through analyzing these scenes of Act 1, we understand how the stage directions work to disrupt traditional systems of language by breaking the relation between words and their standard meanings. Through the transition of the gendered body, Apollinaire disrupts traditional forms while provoking discussion on what these forms, and their reversals, would mean in the contemporary social world. This reading does not stop with Tirésias's exit at the end of Act 1. The transition of the gendered body of the husband to a woman establishes the conflict and critique of Act 2. The next section focuses on the use of the didascalic word as a means to disrupt a power discourse, in the husband's case, patriarchal capitalism.

The husband's transition

The husband undergoes his own transition determined in the stage directions via a poetics of gesture and costume. The transition occurs in scene 3 of the first act as mentioned above through the switching of clothes in the didascalie: "c*ependant que Tirésias, maîtrisant son mari, lui ôte son pantalon, se déshabille, lui passe sa jupe, le ligote*" (888). Tirésias has the power to master the husband ("*maîtrisant son mari*") to change the form of his gender, and thus becomes a figure for the action of transition, whether to her own body or to that of the husband's. The verb phrases "*maîtrisant*," "*lui passe la jupe*,"

and "*le ligote*" are active to enhance the relevance of the didascalie to reversal, or disruption, of power and gender role. This creates a scene of violence in the background, and more importantly in the didascalie, while the spoken dialogue is that of the duelists Presto and Lacouf. This juxtaposition furthers a feeling of tension grounded in the absurd and seemingly insignificant banter of the duelists and the violence of the didascalie marked by gunshots, cardboard rifles, and the duelists falling dead. This tension is meant to destabilize the reader's perspective with numerous changes to the bodies of the characters, their positions in the scene, and thus simultaneity of action. Apollinaire stages various changes the characters to bring focus to the idea of transition determined via a new poetics. The directions work with the dialogue to establish the husband's change as he states "Puisque ma femme est homme il est juste que je sois femme" (893).

In the fifth scene of the first act, the policeman arrives on the scene after hearing the domestic dispute to identify the husband as a woman. Via the megaphone[35] he states "la belle fille" to confirm the husband's transition, provide comic relief, but also satirize another discourse of power: that of the police. The officer plays an important part in the final didascalie of Act 1 that states "*Ils dansent, le mari et le gendarme accouplés*" (898). The husband, now a woman, couples with the policeman, although implicitly through dance. There is meaning to this *accouplement* of two power structures. In the silent space between acts, their joining together produces an event against nature and reality, therefore

[35] The megaphone is an important theatrical property used to enhance discourse through sound, rather than undermine it. The reader understands an intended amplification for their speech as they use the megaphone. Each character uses to proclaim aspects of their discourse. Thérèse uses it for feminist empowerment when she yells "à moi l'univers." The Husband uses it to enhance his discourse of commodity control when he states "Zanzibar a besoin des enfants." Even the police officer uses it to express his sexual lust that leads him to couple with the husband. The megaphone emphasizes the importance of their discourse and its presence vis-à-vis the stage direction.

an exhibition of surreality: a man giving birth. The husband tells the people of Zanzibar, who are also the audience "revenez dès ce soir voir comment la nature / me donnera sans femme une progéniture" (898). Through joining together, the police and the patriarchy can coopt the female body to produce children for the purpose, explained in the second act, of creating and maintaining their own society as a factory of commodities.

The husband's command to the people, like a politician and a director, shows the extent of his power that can manipulate the body for material gain. This command cited above is interestingly delivered in an alexandrine couplet. Similar to Thérèse's empowered line in the first act, Apollinaire uses an alexandrine to give presence to the poetic form itself, and its relation to the character of traditional patriarchal power. In contrast to Thérèse's line, the husband's alexandrine is not delivered via the stage directions but is spoken. This connects the traditional form to the husband's power discourse, while the other example of the alexandrine line suggests the heroic of Thérèse's action. The husband speaks in the traditional structure of the alexandrine that has dominated French verse for centuries. I read this as a deliberate engagement in the drama with literary form to comment on the relation between poetic and political structures. This becomes clearer through readings of the second act that stage how literary forms support power structures to offer a subtext of literary criticism.

In the first scene of the second act, sound effects reinforce the husband's monologue concerning his new power of production, specifically, through the cries of children as indicated in the direction: "*cris continus d'enfants sur la scène, dans les coulisses, et dans la salle pendant toute la scène*" (898). In his opening line he celebrates

his abundance: “Ah! C'est fou les joies de la paternité 40049 enfants en un seul jour” (899). Bohn views this reaction as emphasizing the “husband’s enthusiasm for repopulation, which is presented in a sympathetic light” (118). This makes it seem like the husband is a figure for the main theme of repopulation. However, if one follows the directions, it is clear that the husband’s enthusiasm is for power through repopulation. The husband views procreation as a number, and thus an economic gain, throughout Act 2. The cries of the children are omnipresent as Apollinaire situates the cries across the extra-diegetic space: “*au fond de la scène*,” “*dans les coulisses*,” etc. In this way, his power of production occupies the entire space of the drama. This amplification is meant to establish his new found power after co-opting the female body and coupling with the police. Furthermore, the theatrical properties indicate the presence of children, but also determine a presence of literary creation to establish metatextuality, or in other words, a commentary about literary form. For instance, in the second scene of Act 2, as the husband dialogues with the American journalist about his children's literary talents, a giant book descends: “*Descend un grand livre-pancarte à plusieurs feuilletes sur lesquels on lit*” (901). In the third scene, the husband delivers a monologue about the power and wealth he could attain with children, but via their literary production: “Plus j'aurai d'enfants Plus je serai riche et mieux je pourrai me nourrir (...) faisons d'abord un journaliste comme ça je saurai tout je devinerai le surplus et j'inventerai le reste” (903).

As he continues to ponder the profits of literary journalism the *didascalie* indicates the presence of props such as “*les journaux déchirés*,” *“un pot à colle gigantesque,*” “*une bouteille d'encre*,” and *“un énorme porte plume*” (904). In this way,

Apollinaire gives presence to the very act of literary creation through this *démésure* of giant props, which he then connects via metonymy to children, procreation, and production. In this way, he satirizes contemporary literary production as a means of supporting patriarchal, and thus traditional, authorities like the husband and the police. Dressed as a woman, he controls patriarchal authority and matriarchal production. He explains how literature, journalism, and media can maintain his power, control over commodities, and the dominance of tradition. We understand that through the transitions of the gendered body there is power to be found. This is associated to not only the *esprit nouveau* and the surrealist aesthetic, as mentioned above, but also the dynamics of the theatrical texts and the tensions between modes that make these transitions happen. Via the poetics of props, the subservient woman transitioned to a revolutionary hero. In addition, the hungry husband demanding bacon becomes a super villain who can go against nature to produce an army of children and augment his power with media. Through the first scenes of the second act, Apollinaire shows us that the revolution is off stage, while the despot revels in his power, protected by the police, augmented by the journalist, and passed on to the son for continual reinforcement of this hierarchy.[36] Via the transitions of the characters, Apollinaire stages contemporary tension between revolutionary and reactionary discourses of power, both at play in a nation ravaged by war and seeking transition to a new spirit. In this way, sociopolitical commentary,

[36] In scene four of the second act, there is a brief dialogue between *Le fils* and *Le mari.* The son describes the husband's new state: "Mes chers parents en un seul homme" (905). He demands money from the father in exchange for keeping secret about his father's doings and for providing information concerning current events. The only prop in this scene is the crib in which he was created when the Husband threw all the literary props--ink well, pen, and torn up newspaper, into the crib. The son furthers the link between patriarchal power, money, and media.

conventions of lyric drama, and poetics of stage direction work together to create a hybrid, innovative literary text.

The completion of Thérèse

In addition to the tenets of surprise and humor, the *esprit nouveau* employs prophecy, indicative of a future oriented perspective for art form. Prophecy is staged in Thérèse's return as fortuneteller and seer in the sixth scene of the second act. Thérèse returns dressed as the "Cartomancienne"[37] who predicts the future through the tarot. According to the stage directions, the fortuneteller is supposed to arrive on stage from the audience "*elle arrive du fond de la salle*" (909) to, as Bohn states, "abolish the traditional barrier between the stage and the hall" (114). Instead of arriving from a side of the stage, customary to the story, she arrives from the space of the public, and thus outside of the narrative. This action bridges the spaces of the diegesis and the extra-diegetic to create an important union of spaces that continues during the final scenes. Another *didascalie*

[37] The term *cartomancienne* recalls a poem from Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* "Sur les prophéties." In this poem Apollinaire describes fortune tellers and the success of their methods:

> Une cartomancienne céretane Marguerite je ne sais
> plus quoi
> Est également habile
> Mais Madame Deroy est la mieux inspirée
> La plus précise
> Tout ce qu'elle m'a dit du passé était vrai et tout ce
> qu'elle
> M'a annoncé s'est vérifié dans le temps qu'elle indiquait

To answer possible skepticism regarding the powers of prophecy, Apollinaire finishes the poem with the verse: "Il y a avant tout une façon d'observer la nature et d'interpréter la nature qui est très légitime." The fortuneteller is then in communication with nature, as well as with modern systems of electricity and traditional fortune telling. In this way, the past, present and future create this transcendent character that can foresee.

describes her costume as "*son crâne est éclairé électriquement*" (909). The didascalic term "éclairé" corresponds to the wisdom she has gained off scene as a revolutionary, while "électriquement" refers to modern electric force and technology that reinforces her power. It seems that she has the power of modernity (electricity) as well as the power of antiquity (the tarot) to reach a transcendent level of wisdom to see the future of the nation and directly communicate this to the public.

She implores to the public "Chastes citoyens de Zanzibar qui ne faites plus d'enfants sachez que la fortune et la gloire les forêts d'ananas les troupeaux d'éléphants appartiennent de droit A ceux qui pour les prendre auront fait des enfants" (910). In contrast to the first act, there are no sound effects to interrupt her expression. Her rhetoric delivers a message of the importance of repopulation, the central idea of the *esprit nouveau*, and the main theme of the drama. She states to the policeman "Vous qui ne faites plus d'enfants / Vous mourrez dans la plus affreuses des débines" (911). The speech of the fortuneteller has power and command to describe the sterility, agony and death of the police. The fortuneteller engages the crowd by speaking directly to spectators about their fecundity. She breaks the fourth wall to continue the unity between diegesis and extra-diegetic space that is necessary to the activism. A staged response from a female spectator - "Madame la Cartomancienne Je crois bien qu'il me trompe *vaisselle cassée*" (909) adds comedic effect but also reinforces the relation between the story and the performance space, thus referencing the inside to outside transitory essence of the drama.

To silence the cries of children the fortune teller materializes tarot cards to feed the hungry: "*Tous les enfants se mettent à crier sur la scène et dans la salle. La*

cartomancienne fait les cartes qui tombent du plafond. Puis les enfants se taisent." (911). The Tarot cards are another object of theatrical property and work with the dialogue. They represent a material signifier of prophecy upon which the future of Zanzibar--the children--can be nourished. Both modes of dialogic and didascalic language communicate this idea of a feeding upon the future. The stage directions augment the lyric to give a material presence to an experience of prophecy, and therefore, another tenet of the aesthetic concerned with influencing the future of the nation through repopulation. Thérèse as fortune teller has seen the error of her ways, that is the distraction of revolution that resulted in the coopting of production in the market by the commodity obsessed patriarch. She has returned to redeem herself in heroic fashion, and thus become a figure of activist change. Apollinaire brings her back to speak to, and feed, the nation through theatrical property. She drops the appearance literally in the stage directions "*se débarrassant de ses oripeaux de cartomancienne*" (912). From restrained object, to revolutionary hero, to prophetic tarot reader, she then transitions to duty, thus symbolizing all tenets of the *esprit nouveau* as defined in the essays.

The final scene establishes her as the central figure to understand the activist method. She began as Thérèse, a subservient wife who chooses transition and transcendence to return to the domestic sphere as an individual. She is Tirésias, who does not deny her success as a general, political leader, and hero. Moreover, she is the Tarot reader with the power of prophecy. She states that her power is nothing without the love she desires "qu'importe le trône ou la tombe il faut s'aimer ou je succombe avant que ce rideau ne tombe" (912). By acknowledging the curtain, Apollinaire continues the

association between public and performance to further the link between the two. The transitions in the story and in the theatrical form can influence and speak to the transitions occurring in the nation outside of the theater, and even in the lives of the reader of any time. There is tension and violence in transition but it is necessary for rebirth and renewal. In the *esprit nouveau* philosophy, rebirth is a duty and an honor vis-à-vis the nation, and this message is conveyed to the public via the poetics of props. The husband, passive in this scene, hands back the breasts and ovaries ("voici tout un stock") of the co-opted female body in the form of balloons and rubber balls. The insides have one more transition to the outside to achieve.

Changes to the interior change the exterior

All aspects of the *esprit nouveau* – humor, surprise, prophecy, and duty - all meet in the final staging as Thérèse throws the rubber balls - props symbolic of reproductive eggs - toward the crowd before the music plays and the characters sing and dance: "*elle lache les ballons et lance les balles aux spectateurs*" (913). She commands the props to do their duty and convey the theory concerned with repopulation "envolez-vous oiseaux de ma faiblesse / Allez nourrir tous les enfants de la repopulation" (913). In the text, the didascalie and the performed verse work together to deliver the final command of audience agency vis-à-vis the activist method. The balls are not just eggs, but a material presence, a poetic of prop, of the *esprit nouveau* that seeks renewal of the nation through poetic innovation. The dynamic interplay between the modes of lyric and didascalic

language, create a poetics of aesthetic activism that expresses the sociopolitical theory. By commanding the reader, she passes the agency and duty of activism from herself to them, but also from inside the story to outside in the real world. She figuratively passes the insides of the womb, the creative power of her body, to the audience, thus leaving them with the action they must perform as their social duty: creation. This creation has a physical form through lovemaking, but also the poetic form of artistic creation, innovation, and experimentation.

By bringing the audience into the diegesis, Apollinaire renders them as a character and figure of the system. Through analyzing the dynamics of the characters, we gain insight into Apollinaire's theory, thus rendering the text as a work about the work. In summation, Thérèse embodies the *esprit nouveau* as a figure for surprise, prophecy, transition, gender reversal, duty, and repopulation. The husband is the super villain of despotic traditions, both political and literary, who uses a representation of a woman to exploit production. The People of Zanzibar is a figure for the mute speech poetics of direction whose sound effects and props disturb the delivery of discourse. Most importantly, the reader is the activist agent who rebuilds the real world. The poetic props--the inkwells, balloons, rubber balls, child cries, tarot cards, megaphones, and sound effects--are all extensions of these characters. In this way, the characters should be understood as theatrical properties imbued with meaning relative to the *esprit nouveau* aesthetic.

As demonstrated by the title and by my analysis of stage directions, in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the character body as theatrical property is central to the function

of the work. Apollinaire employs the body, and specifically the female body, like a theatrical prop, corresponding to the exploding balloons, constraining costumes and rubber balls. In the first act, Apollinaire empties the sign of the female body of traditional, domestic meaning in order to transition it from restrained object to liberated hero. In the second act, Apollinaire empowers the husband with the procreative function of the female body through costume. At the end, the husband passively gives back the props of the body to the fortuneteller, who then commands them to the public. If transition is a main theme of the drama and the theory, then the female body, as represented by actor and prop, is a loaded sign through which to convey this theme. To further develop the ideal of transition, inherent in gender reversal and repopulation, we can look closer at the female character body as a literary property in Apollinaire's work. I expand the understanding of transition as not only for drama, the reader, or even the nation in 1917. The next section highlights the scope of Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* and *drame sur-réaliste* that seek transition of aesthetics from modernist victimization to a liberated expression of activism.

The Transition of Aesthetics

Apollinaire's drama is purposeful to exert an influence “sur les esprits et sur les moeurs dans le sens du devoir et de l'honneur” (868). This sense of social duty and honor is bound to the main theme of repopulation to which the female body is central. In order to further understand the intention of the drama as an aesthetic activism of transition, we

can examine the author's staging of the female body as a prop. In *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* the character Thérèse represents a body in transition that passes from domesticated object of command to expression of feminist empowerment and heroic, prophetic fortuneteller, and activist agent. If we "zoom out" of the drama in its historical context, to read the staging of body in transition in the larger context of Apollinaire's work, as well as in similar stagings in modern literature, we can understand another level of the intended transition. This reading situates the drama as an expression of changes to traditional forms that reinforce Apollinaire's didascalic poetics as an important step in the transition of aesthetics.

The stage directions connect an expression of transition to the body of Thérèse who becomes a heroic figure in the drama. Yet in terms of his complete works, Apollinaire did not always textually represent the female body as a sign of the heroic. In fact, in his early work, there is an extreme victimization of the female body. In this final section, I suggest that this victimization in the text is connected to two things: sadism and modernism. Through reading theatricalized stagings of the female body in Apollinaire's early work, specifically *Les Onze mille verges*, we can define his early aesthetic as a modernist victimization of form inherent in sadism. This comparison of his early sadism with his later activist drama will show how his work, and modern aesthetics, transitions from a representation of victimization to an expression of liberation. To read this expression in terms of Rancière's theory, the transition from a poetics of representation to one of expression marks his criteria for the aesthetic regime. The current study does not seek to establish a regime, but to read this transition, as staged in the dramatic text, as a

form of aesthetic activism. In order to further develop this idea, we can analyze the transition from representation to expression around the figure of the textual female body. We have examined how changes to the body as prop express empowerment of the heroic, so now we must examine the victim.

Emptying form of content: A Modernist Prop

Les Onze mille verges is a novella of sadist scenes that the editors of Apollinaire's *Oeuvres Complètes en prose* date to 1906.[38] The narrative details the erotic and political conquests of Romanian count Mony Vibescu. The work presents scenes that portray, through prose narrative, sexual violence for sadistic pleasures that include emptying of the female body of organs. The inherent theatricality of the scenes continues the trope of the female body as prop, and recall similar scenes from Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* and DAF de Sade's *Les Cents vingts journées de Sodome*. In the following examples, the authors empty their prose narrative of traditional erotic content and replace it with representations of extreme sexual violence. In this way, I argue, that the emptying of the female body in the text serves a purpose for modernist critique of genre through representations of victimization. Louis Perceau, author of the *Bibliographie du roman érotique*, describes *Les Onze mille verges* as "plus fort que le Marquis de Sade […] Il laisse loin derrière lui les ouvrages les plus effrayants du divin marquis. […] C'est le roman de l'amour moderne" (*Oprose3,* 1319). Perceau's description of the text

[38] The work was not published for public reading until 1973 by J-J Pauvert, the prosecuted publisher of Sade's *Oeuvres complètes,* author of the *Affaire Sade,* and partial subject of my third chapter.

emphasizes the modern aesthetics of speed and mechanization that Apollinaire employs throughout the prose narrative to paint scenes not of *amour,* but of sexual ferocity to critique modern systems like transportation and transcontinental warfare. Apollinaire presents scene after scene of violent pornography for the purpose of emptying the erotic out of an erotic novel and replacing it with sadism. In doing so, he critiques the erotic genre through exposing its traditional object, the female body, as an empty vessel for victimization by continuous male gratification.

For example, in Chapter IV, Prince Mony Vibescu and his valet Cornaboeux leave Paris, to escape prosecution and travel east by train to continue their sex crimes: "la trépidation du train ne manqua point de produire aussitôt son effet. Mony banda" (905). The train becomes a figure for sexual violence through the association between the railroad and masculine sexual desire as they cross cultural, geographical and bodily borders in modern Europe. As the locomotive surges across the landscape, Mony and his valet engage in an orgy in a train car with an actress and her servant girl. The fact that the victim is an actress works to establish a theatricality to render the scene as a performance. In this scene, Cornaboeux strangles a servant girl, rapes her corpse, and then pulls her intestines out of her vagina: "il introduisit sa main dans la vulve encore tiède et y faisant entrer tout son bras, il se mit à tirer les boyaux de la malheureuse femme de chambre. Au moment de la jouissance il avait déjà tiré deux mètres d'entrailles et entouré la taille comme d'une ceinture de sauvetage" (911). Apollinaire's character empties the servant girl of reproductive organs, just as the novella empties the narrative of traditional

érotisme, replaced by augmented sexual violence that corresponds to modern systems like the railroad.

This technique of emptying form of traditional erotic content recalls Sade's *Les Cents vingts journées de Sodome*. Perhaps this is no coincidence, as the first printed edition of Sade's infamous scroll manuscript was published in 1904 by German doctor Eugène Duehren,[39] and thus contemporary to Apollinaire's novella, as well as the first writing of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* that Apollinaire dates in the préface to 1903.[40] In *Les Cents vingts journées*, four powerful libertines sequester themselves in the isolated Chateau de Silling to engage in a plurality of sex acts. The stories of four former prostitutes chronicle and catalogue hundreds of perversions and inspire the libertines to engage in their acts. Since the stories of the prostitutes inspire the libertines to perform the pleasures, this works to establish theatricality in Sade's prose that once again signals performance. The fourth part of the novel describes numerous types of murderous pleasures in very basic language suggestive of minimalist didascalie that determine prop, setting, and bodily movement. Sade describes one of the orgies as follows: "on lui enfonce dans le con une main armée d'un scalpel, avec lequel on brise la cloison qui

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[39] Apollinaire's *L'oeuvre du Marquis de Sade* that dates to 1908 is included in his complete prose works under the section Les Diables amoureux. Apollinaire's editorial work was influential in bringing Sade's writing out of the bibliothèque de l'enfer and back in public opinion. Apollinaire cites Eugène Duehren, the publisher of the first ever edition of Les Cents vingts journées to state "De Sade comme individu ne peut être éclairci que si on l'examine comme phénomène historique" (797). Michel Onfray labels Apollinaire's editorial work as a *monstruosité littéraire* that helped to create a cult around Sade. Onfray sees the worship of Sade, seen among the surrealists and psychoanalysts throughout the twentieth century, as baseless. In his *contre-histoire La Passion de la méchanceté* Onfray systematically challenges the notions of Sade as a progressive, counter culture type figure worthy of adoration to present him as a sick, boring, reactionary, misogynist criminal.

[40] Apollinaire opens his prefatorial essay with "Sans réclamer d'indulgence, je fais remarquer que ceci est une œuvre de jeunesse, car sauf le Prologue et la dernière scène du deuxième acte qui sont de 1916, cet ouvrage a été fait en 1903" (865).

sépare l'anus du vagin; on quitte le scalpel, on renfonce la main, on va chercher dans ses entrailles et la force à chier par le con; ensuite, par la meme ouverture, on va lui fendre le sac d'estomac" (Sade, *vol. 1*, 371). It would only take one to italicize this quote to make it seem like a traditional didascalie, stripped of any psychological expression or amplified style, and merely minimalist prose focused on gestural movement and bodily prop. Moreover, this scene presents a similar staging of a male aggressor entering a vagina in order to play with the material of her insides, and thus render her body as a theatrical property. As opposed to Cornaboeux, who makes a belt out her intestines, the libertine forces her to defecate through her vagina. This action signals the familiar structure of an emptying of form, or transitioning the inside to the outside. In these scenes from *Les onze mille verges* and *Les cent vingts journées*, this violent attack on the female body as a prop is related to an emptying of conventional erotics to replace them with vicious brutality. This staging of the female body as a theatrical property corresponds in both works to the theme of despotic power that is closed off in a castle or train car, unpunished by contemporary society, and witnessed only by the reader who watches like a passive voyeur or another victim.

Furthermore, as a member of a literary generation in between Sade and Apollinaire, Isidore Ducasse, the self-titled Comte de Lautréamont, employs scene after scene of brutality in *Les Chants de Maldoror*. For example, in Chant Troisième [2] Ducasse offers a theatricalized narrative in which a random passerby finds a letter, dropped by a beggar woman, which stages the brutal death of her daughter. In this letter, Ducasse's prose-poetics stage a scene in which Maldoror empties a young girl of her

internal organs through her vagina: “De ce trou élargi il retire successivement les organes intérieurs; les boyaux, les poumons, le foie et enfin le coeur lui-même sont arrachés de leurs fondements et entrainés à la lumière du jour, par l'ouverture épouvantable” (205). The sadistic act of emptying the female body once again becomes the aesthetic for modernist critique of form, in the case of Ducasse, that is an emptying of verse structure out of the text to create his fluid prose-poetic. Ducasse states in Chant Deuxième [4] “Ma poésie ne consistera qu'à attaquer […] Les volumes s'entasseront sur les volumes, jusqu'à la fin de ma vie, et, cependant, l'on n'y verra que cette seule idée, toujours présente à ma conscience” (138). The staging of attack on the female (and often in Ducasse's work the androgynous) body is a figure to understand his poetics of attack. The emptying of the female body is a figure in his text, along with vampiric bestiality and angelic homoeroticism, to challenge and attack traditional modes of expression through a modernist critique of traditional poetic forms.

By violently opening and emptying the female body in these scenes, Apollinaire, Sade and Ducasse expose materiality whether sperm, blood, organs or feces, to turn inside to outside to make the fetishized material the interior of the female body, not the exterior, thus inverting traditional aesthetics of the erotic genre. This eroticization of the inside signals an aesthetic fascination with materiality, not in the sense of actual bodily organs, but as a metaphor for a growing fascination with the inner workings of aesthetics, literary form, and text. This comparative analysis offers an association between sadism and aesthetics to highlight a formal purpose for literary sadism, which is not for pornographic gratification through the sexually violent, but an aesthetic expression of

violent attack on literary form, as well as contemporary social systems and discourses of power. Sade used it to rage against the *Ancien Régime* and his prison walls in 1785. Ducasse employs it across his epic prose poem to attack traditional modes and bourgeois life at the end of the Second Empire. Apollinaire uses sadism in 1906 to critique the erotic genre in *Les Onze Milles Verges,* as well as modern systems like the railroad. The victimization of the female body can be read then as an attack on form and thus a means for modernist critique. This method of emptying the reproductive organs associated with the vagina signals the sterility of modernism, which seeks to attack traditions and not necessarily innovate forms for social and cultural renewal. This explicit victimization contrasts the aesthetics of the *esprit nouveau* that command duty and honor to innovate poetics, repopulate and rebuild society.

The staging of an emptying of form recalls the scene in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* mentioned above when Thérèse empties the house of domestic objects. Through the poetics of props, this scene expresses the emptying domestic objectification from her identity to redefine herself as the revolutionary Tirésias. This example demonstrates how the poetics of props, and the textual dynamics of drama, can convey to a reader an emptying of traditional content for the purpose of redefining language. If we apply a similar reading in terms of form, we can say that Apollinaire is emptying his theater of traditional lyric structures and devices to fill the drama with a didascalic poetic. Yet Apollinaire intends his new poetic of stage direction to be a means of expressing his *esprit nouveau* theory. This offers a different system beyond modernist critique of form. His emptying is purposeful, not just for attack like Sade, Ducasse, or his younger self.

After the trauma of the war, he seeks to rework the dramatic text to become an interested, activist spirit of innovation via the didascalie poetics. The material conditions of drama work well to help pass this theory onto the public via the theatrical prop of the reproductive organs ("tout un stock") as represented in the rubber balls. In this way, his use of the female body as a theatrical property in the drama differs from the aforementioned texts. This difference highlights a shift in aesthetics and epistemology between a modernist poetics of attack and one of activism that seeks change to forms for the renewal of society.

La femme nouvelle and l'esprit nouveau

But why is the female body so important to the aesthetic system? In the chapter "Sexuality as Terrorism" from *The Sadeian Woman,* Angela Carter contends "Seventy years ago Apollinaire could equate Juliette with the New Woman" (72). Her statement refers to Apollinaire's description of Sade's Juliette as "la femme nouvelle qui . . . renouvellera l'univers."[41] One could say that the "New Woman," who screams "je suis féministe" and challenges male authority, extends beyond Juliette to the character Thérèse. Even though Carter indicates that "to be a woman is to be automatically at a disadvantage in a man's world, just like being poor" (78) there is a way out of the objectification inherent in disadvantage to achieve the subjectivity of heroism: "If she

[41] Apollinaire's full quote is "Juliette, au contraire, représente la femme nouvelle qu'il entrevoyait, un être dont on n' a pas encore idée, qui se dégage de l'humanité, qui aura des ailes et qui renouvellera l'univers." (*Œuvres en prose, tome iii,* 800)

abandons the praxis of femininity, then it is easy enough to enter the class of the rich, provided one enters on the terms of that class. The life of Juliette proposes a method of profane mastery of the instruments of power" (79). The abandonment of the "praxis of femininity" and the acquiring of "the profane mastery of instruments of power" determines not only the heroic narrative that Thérèse embodies in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* but also the theatrical form of the *drame surréaliste* in which the instruments of power are the mute props that disrupt discourses and reverse gender roles.

I have shown that her abandonment of femininity and her mastery of instruments of power occur in the space of the *didascalie* as her gender transition. The stagings show how Thérèse casts off the "birds of her frailty" that keep her subservient to her husband, and to the nation, to transition to hero, prophet, and activist. This reading leads to an understanding of why Apollinaire binds his *esprit nouveau* to the theatrical property of the female body. As Carter states, "male sexuality exhausts itself in exertion" (104). For Apollinaire, the female body is the perfect prop through which he can convey his poetics and his theory because of its power to produce not only children, but also the energy of orgasm. In reference to Carter's description, the male orgasm is a form of castration. If we look at Apollinaire's male heroes, like Mony Vibescu and Croniamantal, we find death, sterility, and paralyzed, petrified monuments. The obelisk, the symbol of patriarchal power *par excellence*, is only an immobile stone and thus not an active agent of change. Even the husband in the drama gives the body props back to Thérèse and accepts his passive and silent role, while she actively tosses the body to the audience, transfers the agency to them and commands them to leave the theater and repopulate.

The method must be energized through the workings of the female body, and the dynamics of the text that transcend castration and death, like each performance or reading of the drama. But there is an important difference between Apollinaire and Sade in terms of the female. They both value the female body as a producer of *jouissance,* however, they differ vastly in the female body's role as producer of life. Throughout his *œuvre*, Sade promotes jouissance, but also sterility. His female heroes continuously abort or do whatever is in their means to avoid children. Furthermore, in *La Philosphie dans le boudoir*, Eugénie sews up her mother's vagina, which also causes the mother to lose consciousness and voice. This prevents the mother, the spokesperson for the virtue of the *Ancien régime*, from ever creating more offspring or speaking the dominant discourse associated with virtue. At the end of the work, there is an allusion to a tomorrow, but that day never comes. In Sade's world, there is never a future, only a silenced past and an enduring present of orgasm and philosophy. In contrast, after the war, Apollinaire values and extolls the future of the nation through repopulation that is the main theme of his work as Thérèse commands "Allez nourrir tous les enfants de la repopulation." This line occurs before there is a final coming together as the People of Zanzibar, Thérèse, the Husband, and even the audience, sing and dance. Here we see the difference in their systems, Sade writes modernist attack while Apollinaire stages aesthetic activism. This difference, reached through comparing their works, signals a change to epistemology, and specifically how dramatic modes and staging of theatrical property can influence the transmission of knowledge for an activist purpose.

Conclusion

Sexual energy is the mute but not silent factor of Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* that he stages in the hero Thérèse, as Peter Read confirms: “Aux yeux d'Apollinaire l'énergie sexuelle est une source fondamentale de vitalité créatrice, capable de briser le moule des habitudes et de l'ordre établi” (175). Sexual energy, or the energy of sexuality, unleashed through the gender reversal, is grounded in the poetics of props. Through analyzing his didascalie and the use of theatrical properties in his *drame-surréaliste*, one gains a better understanding of how the dynamics and modes of drama work with aesthetico-political theory in order to influence society by making a public feel an idea. In that change of epistemology we discover that drama can be a hybrid, 'transgenre' experience and art piece for didactic, comic, social, and innovative expression. Apollinaire desires reinvigoration of drama to inspire the public for procreation in both a physical sense for children and an artistic sense for creative production. In doing so, he transitions his poetic from modernist victimization to aesthetic activism via the intervention of imaginative *didascalie* and the poetics of props. He then employs the mute speech power and material force of stage directions to convey his aesthetico-political theory to the reader. In doing so he creates a dynamic text, a field of action that transcends lyric verse, manifesto ideology, and conventional drama, while employing all of their forms and modes.

The main property of his system is the female body, and some could surely argue, an exploitation of the female body. This continues to raise questions about the feminist and queer currents in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. Whether his work is pro or anti-feminist

is not the issue for this study. What I have shown is that as Apollinaire advanced in his career, he changed his use of the textual female body as a means of expression. He saw the representation of the body in literature as no longer an object of weakness to be emptied and abused for commentary on dominant discourses of traditional power structures. It is a powerful center of creation to express an overthrow, or a reversal, of those power structures. As Apollinaire has her shout “Je suis féministe,” the textual treatment of the female body offers an understanding of how changes and transitions to forms can express sociopolitical commentary. It is not in her words "je suis féministe" where the radical message is found. It is in the combined effort of words and body that makes activism happen. In Apollinaire's drama, this corresponds to the dynamic interplay between lyric and didascalic poetics.

Chapter 2: Artaud's Poetics of Cruelty

"A moon shone bright above her trial as flames ate through her body defiled."
- Papa Emeritus I

Introduction

In 1599, sixteen year old Beatrice Cenci was condemned to death by Pope Clement VIII and executed in Rome for her role in the murder of her incestuous father, the Count Francesco Cenci. In the nineteenth century, her portrait, hanging in the Palazzo Barbarini in Rome, inspired both Percy Shelley and Stendhal to write her story, the former with lyric verse in the drama *The Cenci* (1819) and the latter in the prose chronicle "Les Cenci" included in his *Chroniques Italiennes* (1837). In 1935 ex-surrealist poet, film actor, and theater director Antonin Artaud found inspiration in Beatrice's story to stage it as *Les Cenci*.[42] The production became the first, and ultimately only, representation of his theoretical Theater of Cruelty, detailed in two manifestos and several essays written from 1931 until 1936. In a promotional article from May 1st, 1935, Artaud claims that his *Cenci* is not an adaptation of Shelley or Stendhal's work, but a theatrical text uniquely derived from stage direction: "ce sera la première fois . . . que l'on aura affaire à un texte de théâtre écrit en fonction d'une mise en scène" (Artaud, *Œeuvres*, 639). In a 1935 letter to Louis Jouvet, Artaud is clear to highlight the value of the text based on the reaction of his audience during rehearsals described as "d'emballement sans

[42] In May 1935 at the Folies-Wagram operetta theater in Paris.

réserve sur le texte seul, sans mise en scène."[43] Artaud's insistence on the quality of the theatrical text over the *mise-en-scène* seemingly contradicts his manifestos that call for the overthrow of textual theater. For example, he states in the first manifesto from 1932 that his project seeks "avant tout de rompre l'assujettissement du théâtre au texte" (558). Artaud's contradictory stance as to the function of text for theater opens discussion as to where the *Cenci* fits into his overall vision for the Theater of Cruelty. *Les Cenci* is often disregarded in studies on Artaud in favor of his poetry from his early Surrealist career to his later writings in the Rodez asylum. Moreover, there is substantial work on his theoretical essays compiled in *Le Théâtre et son Double,* as well as his actual mise en scène for the Alfred Jarry Theater and "Les Cenci." These studies focus on his direction and his innovative use of sound and prop, while also examining the productions in the context of the contemporary surrealist art scene and the political climate of fascist Europe. The current study of the text of *Les Cenci,* read alongside his "Theater of Cruelty" propositions, expands the scholarly understanding of the drama as an example of aesthetic activism that continues to speak to, as Artaud states, "des inquiétudes d'aujourd'hui" (641).

Artaud's tragedy, written and staged in 1935 but not published until after his death, is a liberal translation of Shelley's drama[44] mixed with highly stylized didascalie featuring frequent poetic devices. I read his extensive use of poetic device in stage

[43] Lettre à Louis Jouvet du 7 mars 1935. (Artaud, *Les Cenci*, 39)

[44] Artaud's *Cenci* has a unique relation to Shelley's drama that is a balance between copying on one hand, but also innovation and difference on another. Michel Corvin, editor of the most recent publication of *Les Cenci* in paperback, states "Quoi qu'il pense de sa pièce, Artaud a son Shelley sous le coude quand il compose la sienne et bien des éléments (voire des phrases) sont démarqués – ou parfois copiés – de son devancier et pourtant sa pièce est totalement originale, c'est-a-dire différente dans sa structure profonde comme dans son rythme et sa tonalité" (39).

directions, as well as his manipulation of textual modes, as a means to establish a theater of action or activism. In the essay “Le théâtre et la cruauté,” Artaud defines *cruauté* as all that is action (“tout ce qui agit”), to then apply this force to an understanding of a new concept of theater: “c'est sur cette idée d'action poussée au bout, et extrême que le théâtre doit se renouveler” (555). In other words, for Artaud, cruelty is synonymous with action, that when pushed to the extreme, can bring about renewal and change. Furthermore, in the first manifesto, he elaborates on the concept of *cruauté* in terms of action that is based on sense experience as “toutes les façons et de tous les moyens qu'il a pour agir sur la sensibilité” (559). His theater seeks to develop a use of language that transfers an idea to a public through sense because “la foule pense d'abord avec ses sens” (556) and “c'est par la peau qu'on fera rentrer la métaphysique dans les esprits” (565). In this way, we can understand Artaudian cruelty as an aesthetic system, similar to Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau,* in which poetics of stage direction intend to transfer an ideal of change and renewal. In a letter to Jean Paulhan, Artaud extends his idealized *cruauté* “dans un sens large” to represent a spirit ("esprit") that is “rigueur, application et décision implacable, détermination irréversible, absolue” (566). I read his concept of cruelty as the expression of an activist spirit in his work that seeks to influence change, or as Artaud states, “un sens de la vie renouvelée par le théâtre” (509). An examination of the *Cenci* text furthers an understanding of his theater of action speech. In this chapter, I argue that Artaud's innovations of stage directions in the *Cenci* are meant to convey a sociopolitical expression of protest against despotic powers, thus rendering his didascalic poetic as an aesthetic activism.

I read Artaud's staging of the Cenci story as a *mise en abyme* of *mise en scène*. In this way, his dramatic text can be read as emblematic of aspects of his theory on theater. Through close readings of his stage directions, and their dynamic alongside his dialogic lyric, my analysis shows how Artaud employs a 'Poetics of Cruelty' as a method to exteriorize, or give presence to, despotic power structures and activist agents that are at once poetical and political. In the drama, the Count's sexual desire for his daughter, and her murderous revenge, are the forces of action and cruelty that drive the tragic narrative of the Cenci family's demise. His characters, and their dynamic in the text, become figures loaded with information relative to his aesthetic system that seeks a new poetics of direction and action to express sociopolitical concerns regarding abusive power. For example, we can examine the incestuous relation between the Count and Béatrice as an abusive power dynamic that corresponds to the timeless narrative with roots in the origins of theater and civilization. My analysis shows that the Count represents traditional poetics of lyric tragedy that impose oppressive structures and restrictions on expression. Béatrice, on the other hand, represents a figure, like Thérèse before her, who transitions from object of authoritative command to an agent of activist subversion. With the aid of mute assassins, who I read as figures for the mute speech power of the didascalie, Béatrice becomes an activist force to kill the Count and free her expression from the despotic structures that abound. Even though her voice is ultimately silenced by death, her activist call lives on with each reading of the text. In this way, the Cenci story becomes a staging of tension between aspects of cruelty: the traditional cruelty of despotism against the theatrical cruelty of activism. With this reading, we gain a better understanding of what

Artaud means by the term "cruelty" and its relation to the aesthetics of theater meant for sociopolitical expression.

In order to clearly demonstrate how Artaud's tragedy is a staging of his poetic system, firstly, I evaluate his reasoning for choosing the Cenci story as a manifestation of his Theater of Cruelty. He finds in this historical incest narrative a force of dissolution with connections to mythology and the origins of tragedy and theater. His poetics of cruelty enhance the menace and trauma that the crime of incest poses to the family and organized society. This menace of destruction is necessary to dissolve cultural boundaries through transgressing taboos. Through applying contemporary scholarship that connects his work to trauma theory, we can understand his theater of cruelty in the Cenci as seeking dissolution of structures via influencing trauma for the purpose of awakening. As such, there is a connection in his theater between the incest narrative, trauma, and the renewal inherent in a new concept of action theater that results in an innovative textual poetics. Secondly, I apply close readings to the didascalie, first in his one act play "Jet de Sang" (1925), and then systematically throughout *Les Cenci*. This method establishes how he infuses poetic device in his directions to enhance a feeling of menace concerning incest and sexual violence. Moreover, in the Cenci, the close readings demonstrate how his characters are figures for his activist system, specifically, the Count as despotic power and Béatrice as activist agent. His staging of these figures, that represent aspects of his system, brings this very system into presence so he can transmit his theater of cruelty activism to the audience, in a sense, staging the manifesto. Thirdly, I read the violent

interplay between dialogic and didascalic modes[45] through the figure of incest. I turn to the works of the Marquis de Sade that influenced Artaud's development of the theater of cruelty, to connect a theoretical definition of incest to my readings of his theatrical form.

I determine that the action of incest refers to parts of the same whole, like the two Cenci, that mix together in a clash of violence to dissolve boundaries, structures, and hierarchies of representation. I extend this conceptualization of incest to a reading of his confrontational use of didascalic and dialogic modes that seek to disrupt traditional forms, transgress cultural and theatrical conventions, and attempt to awaken new possibilities for theater, poetics and culture. Finally, I read this disruption of despotism and activist call for renewal, found in the mute speech of his textual theater, in terms of sociopolitical expression. To finish, my study engages Kimberly Jannarone's historical reading of *Les Cenci* that argues for an understanding of Artaud's director as fascist dictator. Based on my readings of the Cenci drama, Artaud's theater is not an exercise of fascism, but a subversion of it via an aesthetic activism. Through this dialogue with Jannarone's scholarship, my study offers the relevance of Artaud's poetics of cruelty for literary studies in the context of twenty first-century neo-fascism.

Trauma, Awakening and the Poetics of Cruelty

[45] Michel Corvin highlights the importance of the interplay between didascalie and dialogue as a major difference between Shelley and Artaud's versions : "[Shelley] est l'homme de longues tirades littéraires alors qu'Artaud est celui des indications scéniques précises, nombreuses et variés (de gestes, de mouvements, de sons, et de lumières), lourdes de valeur symbolique, qui coupent ou doublent constamment des répliques presque toujours brèves" (34). In this way Artaud's deliberate, and often violent, use of the didascalic form works to limit the literariness of the text and enhance the materiality of the mise-en-scène that corresponds to his idealized gestural language.

Through evaluating the textual dynamics of the drama, we will be able to understand how Artaud employs tensions, in both content and form, to produce the action speech of his poetics of cruelty. Artaud co-opts the incest narrative for the purpose of creating this tension through the theme that traces its origins to the deepest roots of theater and civilization. This is why the two Cenci, rather than any other historical figures, are central to Artaud's inversion, or perversion, of theatrical form. Michel Corvin calls Artaud's work a staging of a "combat de monstres qui, étrangers à toute psychologie et à toute morale, s'élèvent au niveau de la tragédie et du mythe" (*Les Cenci*, 35). My analysis shows that this monster battle extends outside of the frame narrative of the incest conflict, to be read as a staging of battle between the modes of textual drama. Through employing this story involving incest and parricide Artaud can connect his work to the larger corpus of tragedy and myth. Explaining Artaud's inclination towards mythology,[46] Evelyn Grossman notes "[c]e qu'Artaud cherche dans les mythes . . . c'est une force de dissolution des particularismes individuels, une posture unitaire et collective . . . qui efface les contours limités des caractères humains" (*Œuvres*, 403). Through staging the mythology and tragedy of the incest narrative, Artaud finds the force to dissolve the boundaries that form personality and individuality, while expressing possible historical, ontological, and epistemological truths. The incest narrative presents for Artaud an expression of a *posture unitaire* that is an idealized totality reached through abandoning culturally imposed restrictions. This action of dissolving boundaries and forms to reach a unity is a major aim for Artaud's poetics.

[46] Specifically related to Artaud's historical novel *Héliogabale* – which explores the life of the incestuous and transgender Roman emperor Elagabalus - written in 1934 and thus contemporary with *Les Cenci*.

Even though Artaud speaks about theater in his theoretical writings through figurative associations to plague, surgery, murder, loss of self, annihilation, and cruelty, he does not only seek destruction. His theater employs forces of destruction to produce an idealized awakening. In his chapter "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," Jacques Derrida describes Artaud's work as an expression of a desire to destroy "this declining, decadent, and negative Western theater" that "must be reawakened and reconstituted in order to revive the implacable necessity of affirmation on its Eastern horizon" (233). In the context of *Les Cenci*, Michel Corvin confirms Artaud's ideal method of provoking an awakening through destruction as "*Les Cenci,* pense-t-il, auront ce pouvoir de faire sauter tous les verrous et d'atteindre les esprits au plus profond" (*Les Cenci*, 33). In a journal entry from 1934, and thus contemporary to his development of a theater of cruelty production, Artaud's former lover Anaïs Nin, who lived in and wrote about incestuous relations, relates Artaud's reaction to the audience's rejection of his Sorbonne conference presentation: "Il écumait de colère: 'ils veulent toujours entendre parler *de*; ils veulent entendre une conférence objective 'Le théâtre et la peste,' et moi je veux leur donner l'expérience même, la peste même, pour qu'ils soient terrifiés et qu'ils se réveillent. Je veux les réveiller'" (*Œuvres*, 397). The Theater of Cruelty, and its manifestation in *Les Cenci*, is the dehumanizing force to terrify, destroy, but, most importantly, awaken. Scholarship on Artaud's theater has developed his ideal of awakening, but never ties it to a message of activism and action.

For instance, in *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama,* Jane Goodall reads Artaud's theater as resistance to "all forms of coercive, alienating systems of control and

domination" that "foresees the possibility of a true awakening of the self" (15, 18). Indeed, she determines his work to be protest and resistance to power structures, but mainly for a personal, esoteric transcendence or awakening of the subject on a spiritual level, not on a social level. In *Artaud and his doubles*, Kimberly Jannarone argues against Artaud's theater as producing awakening unto a "dreamed of liberal collective" (196) through situating Artaud's crowd "where it belongs historically, conceptually and socially" (196). Her conclusion is that the theater of cruelty is meant to render a crowd "motivated by fear, frustration, and disgust that yearns for a loss of individuality, leaving its members open to the most manipulative dynamics of crowd formation" (196). Jannarone views Artaud's theater not as a protest representative of "the aesthetic or empowering language of the avant-garde, progressive politics, or sympathetic seers" (186) but an exercise of power and violence "with a reactionary, frustrated, interwar discourse" (186). She claims that this attests to Artaud's vision of the authoritarian control of the director. Goodall views Artaud's theater as self-awakening, while Jannarone criticizes his theater for its purpose of annihilation, or destruction, of the subject, that "proposes nothing for the spectator, society, or mankind except for the opportunity to submit" (186). I believe that even though their arguments contrast, when viewed through the lens of the aesthetic activism of changes to form, they connect to highlight Artaud's method. Jannarone supports the idea of the annihilation of all subjective expression in the individual spectator. However, I read this violent suppression of the individual as the devaluing of the psychological subject in lyric drama, expressed through Artaud's deliberate suppression of lyric device, as well as his use of silence and mute speech.

Through this violence, the intended awakening occurs on a textual level, to achieve a new form of poetics of an action theater concerned with sociopolitical expression. This textual awakening results in the poetic potential of stage direction and the space of the didascalie that can be a new expressive mode. This purpose seems to get lost in Artaud's manic, cosmic language that obscures the action speech of his theater as an expression of the sociopolitical.

To develop further the ideal of awakening, and its connection to his theatrical form, one must acknowledge the work of Robert Vork and Aileen Forbes. Both scholars read Artaud's tragedy through the lens of trauma theory, as a change to conventional theater that creates a "traumatized witness" and "Theaters of Trauma." Both authors read Artaud's *Les Cenci* as the staging of an event--the incest narrative--for the purpose of traumatizing the audience/reader. Their scholarship meets in the idea that trauma offers awakening, but, as they show, through different approaches to dramatic modes. Vork explores the role of trauma in Artaud's use of dream narrative as a way of representing the traumatized subject's possible awakening: "the dream indeed acts as a repetition of violence" but "holds open the door to a further possibility of awakening" (324). Aileen Forbes compares Shelley and Artaud's tragedies in order to highlight the tension between diegesis (Shelley's telling lyric) and mimesis (Artaud's showing through *mise-en-scène*). Forbes argues that "to prompt an 'awakening' - Shelley and Artaud . . . co-opt the trauma scenario as an epistemological paradigm in which only at the expense of shattering violence can their 'theaters of trauma' effect a glimpse of truth" (398). To support their argument, Vork and Forbes both employ close readings of *Les Cenci* to highlight the

importance of loss of speech, which they read as representative of the staging of an unspeakable act. In Artaud's work, this loss of speech, resulting from an experience of trauma, signals the importance of dreams for Vork, while Forbes evaluates Artaud's mimetic direction over (or against) Shelley's diegetic lyric. Based on this scholarship, a study of the unspeakable acts (incestuous rape and parricide), and the trauma it induces, offers ways to understand aspects of Artaud's theatrical, narrative, and poetical form.

Robert Vork poses the question: "how, and to what ends, can we discern the 'things that no one can say?'" (312). Vork finds an expression of the loss of the conscious subject in the presence of dream descriptions. However, there is a textual space concerned entirely with "the things that no one can say:" the mute speech of the didascalie. In this way, Artaud's didascalie, loaded with poetic device and theatrical properties, can effectively make manifest the unspeakable act of incest in a "mute but not silent" textual mode. This is how Artaud creates the action of "rigueur violente" (*Œuvres*, 580), that is his theatrical and poetical cruelty. By choosing *Les Cenci* as his manifestation of cruelty, Artaud seeks to link the incest narrative with his poetics of stage direction to produce a menacing feeling for a traumatic effect to dissolve the traditional fixed structures of lyric expression in theatrical form. Through the aforementioned scholarship, we can then understand Artaud's use of the silent space of direction as a space to create trauma, which offers the possibility of awakening not through dreams, but through the material conditions of action. Through his staging techniques that purposefully break the poetic conventions of lyric drama by placing them in the mute space of direction, Artaud believes that activism, or change, can happen: "Briser le

langage pour toucher la vie, c'est faire ou refaire le théâtre. . . . Ceci amène à rejeter les limitations habituelles de l'homme et des pouvoirs de l'homme, et à rendre infinies les frontières de ce qu'on appelle la réalité" (509). In *Les Cenci*, by breaking, or perhaps disturbing, conventional lyric forms and dialogic modes with amplified stage direction, Artaud's poetics of cruelty work to disrupt discourses that establish the 'pouvoirs de l'homme.' Once again, his cosmic rhetoric of *rendre infinies* has a tendency to blur or obscure the purpose of his poetics that are meant to give a material presence to menace and trauma to dissolve structures and produce an awakening.

Scholars have attempted an understanding of Artaud's work in an activist sense. For example, in his chapter "Artaud's Manifesto Theater," Martin Puchner calls Artaud's theoretical prose writing of his *Theater and Its Double* "a form of action speech" (206) that exemplifies "the dominance of the manifesto over art that lies at the heart of the avant-garde" (197). Puchner's use of terms like "action" and "dominance" highlight the force and power play derived from the "raw tension between the manifesto and the theater" (197). One could extend this tension to a reading of the textual modes of lyric discourse and material stage direction. Puchner concludes that the manifestos are "abrupt, poetic, and accented" (207). This description of his manifesto prose exemplifies how I read his stage directions: as an 'abrupt' interplay with dialogic lyric, filled with 'poetic' devices for an 'accented' purpose of activist change. Artaud sees this change on a cosmic and cultural level. I believe that this change could also be read on a sociopolitical level by looking at the textual dynamics in *Les Cenci*. Stage directions are a space in which Artaud creates force through the tension between meaning and presence. This tension is

seemingly omnipresent across the dramas of the authors in my study as the didascalie becomes the space where meaning (discourse) is in tension with presence (direction), thus rendering the didascalie as an innovative poetic space for an expression of an activist theater. We can read his didascalic poetics as a reinvention of the manifesto genre, as he employs the material presence and didactic imperative of *didascalie* to stage the action speech of aesthetico-political discourse. *Les Cenci* and the Theater of Cruelty essays may contradict at points, but this contradiction creates tension between the works to determine the agitation, the force of action, "tout ce qui agit," that is his action speech of cruelty. We can then read his use of language in *Les Cenci* as a poetics of cruelty that express his theory of the theater of cruelty, similar to Apollinaire's *drame surréaliste* expressing tenets of his *esprit nouveau*.

Although he states to Jean Paulhan that his ideal of cruelty contains "ni de sadisme ni de sang" (*Œuvres*, 566), suffering is important for the function of the method. Jannarone elaborates on Artaud's theater as "an event" whose "terrible task" is to "return us to a devastating truth, a discovery that must be experienced through suffering" (151). An aesthetics of suffering felt by the audience, or imagined by the reader, is the all-important method for Artaud's theatrical cruelty. His stage directions are then the textual link between the practice of aesthetics of suffering and his theoretical theater outlined in his manifestos. As I will show in the next section, his poetical language in the directions corresponds to the descriptions of his idealized theater as outlined in the first manifesto of the Theater of Cruelty. His poetic language of direction is "mi-chemin entre le geste et la pensée . . . ce langage visuel des objets, des attitudes, des gestes en faisant de ces signes

une manière d'alphabet" that results in a "métaphysique de la parole" (558). These descriptions determine Artaud's vision of changing language, and thus culture, through a theater in which the system of communication is created within the body, of the performer and the spectator, for a metaphysical purpose, that Puchner labels as the paradoxical "metaphysical mise-en-scene" (202). For Jannarone, the body is essential to the power of the director who "creates his or her work directly with or on a body of people." (134). This fits well with Jannarone's focus on Artaud's actual performances. But looking at the text of *Les Cenci*, we must read the body of the performer as an imagined simulation during the act of reading, which calls attention to Artaud's use of language and the reader's understanding of the traditional didascalie as a material space. In this way, reading the didascalie creates a link between the controlled body of the performer and the poetic device, both of which function dynamically in the textual direction. This raises the stakes of his poetics of stage direction that attempt, through devices of sound, appearance, and gesture to reach as close as possible to physical presence through employing the material conditions of the didascalie. Just like Apollinaire tries to make his readers feel an idea by employing surprise and humor, for Artaud's theater it is a feeling of menace and unsettling disgust. To create this feeling in the reader, Artaud looks to the crimes of incest and parricide. A feeling of menace works with an aesthetics of the nightmarish, uncanny, beyond real, mythological force Artaud desires to create the *posture unitaire* of a "sorte d'équation passionante entre l'Homme, la société, la Nature, et les Objets" (559). When this union is achieved, through dissolving structures via a poetics of violence, trauma, and cruelty, perhaps a new theater can awaken culture, society, and

nature. Perhaps textual tensions can dissolve theatrical structures to reinvigorate aesthetic experience and grasp “la poésie tout court, sans forme et sans texte” (552).

Reading the Poetics of Cruelty in *Jet de Sang*

Artaud's vision of a didascalic poetics did not start with *Les Cenci*. Its origins can be found in his one act play “Jet de Sang” published by the NRF in the 1925 collection *L'Ombilic des limbes*. The surrealist-era work includes poetry in fixed verse and fluid prose, letters, dream analysis, and essays, that demonstrate Artaud's use of a plurality of genres infused with poetic device. In her study *Antonin Artaud: L'énonciation ou l'épreuve de la cruauté*, Catherine Bouthers-Paillart elaborates on Artaud's use of anaphore in a prose text from *L'Ombilic des limbes* entitled “Lettre à Monsieur le Legislateur de la loi sur les stupéfiants.” She describes the poetic device in the prose letter as purposeful to disrupt the epistolary genre (53). She states that Artaud's anaphore, and his use of repetition in general, assures “les choses dans l'actualité” and creates “une structure anaphorique” that gives a body (“donné corps”) to his poetics of “éclatement” (53, 54). I would like to further her claim to state that Artaud's use of standard poetic device in the didascalie is meant to disrupt conventional genre, but also gives body not just to his *poétique*, but also to poetic device itself. In doing so, Artaud gives structure to traditional poetic devices via the material conditions of didascalie, to then employ the tensions within his drama to dissolve this structure and undermine the authority of lyric device in theater.

His antagonism is not just focused on poetic form, but also the reader. In the preface to *L'Ombilic des limbes,* Artaud declares: "Je voudrais faire un Livre qui dérange les hommes, qui soit comme une porte ouverte et qui les mène où ils n'auraient jamais consenti à aller, une porte simplement abouchée avec la réalité." (*Œuvres*, 105). Even in this preface written a decade before the Cenci production, and even before any concept of his theater of cruelty, we can grasp Artaud's concept of a literature of action that commands the public to go to new places. The new poetic provokes a derangement to force the reader, even without consent, into a new awareness of reality, thus offering an awakening. This theoretical work finds its best expression in the "Jet de Sang,"[47] and specifically the prose-poetic didascalie therein. The didascalic mode is, in its essence, exactly *abouchée* with reality based on its use of establishing material body, prop, décor, and setting in time and space. Jannarone acknowledges the unique structure of Artaud's one act play, that foreshadows his future experiments with highly stylized production plans: "with more stage directions than dialogue, the short play reads like a scenario" (148). Artaud's expanded stage directions often defy logic and any plausible chance of staging, thus enhancing their poetic, oneiric, and hyperbolic qualities that challenge conventional staging. This unstageability calls into question the actual craft of direction as well as the function of didascalie in a literary text, therefore disrupting the genre of

[47] This piece, a parody of "La Boule de verre" by Armand Salacrou (Artaud, 118) is a great example of poetics indicative of Bretonian surrealism "un ouragan les sépare en deux" and Apollinairian surrealism "un immense jet de sang lacère la scène." The spurt of God's blood that splashes on the stage and the crowd recalls the tactile effect seen in *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* that uses balloons and rubber balls to produce an effect of presence to deliver an ideological message. The idea of parody is important as Artaud is dialoguing with theatrical convention both that of Salacrou and Apollinaire.

drama. In "Jet de Sang," Artaud develops a new type of didascalie,[48] one that diverges from traditional staging in practical space, time, and character. The attention of the reader moves to the stylized didascalie, rather than the lyric expression. Artaud begins his project of undermining traditional lyric expression in favor of a directorial poetics that can influence a materially focused engagement with reality. This foreshadows the material, hieroglyphic language[49] based in sense experience that he describes in the theater of cruelty writings.

The first stage direction--what I term the *didascalincipit*--establishes a construct of material, physical space, but with an abundance of language and forms (bodily, animal, cosmic, architectural, etc.) to challenge the reader of the dramatic text, accustomed to more simplified *didascalie* meant to support the diegesis:

> *Un silence. On entend comme le bruit d'une immense roue qui tourne et dégage du vent. Un ouragan les sépare en deux.*
>
> *À ce moment, on voit deux astres qui s'entrechoquent et une série de jambes de chair vivante qui tombent avec les pieds, des mains, des chevelures, des masques, des colonnades, des portiques, des temples, des alambics, qui tombent, mais de plus en plus lentement, comme s'ils tombaient dans du vide, puis trois scorpions l'un après l'autre, et enfin une grenouille, et un scarabée qui se dépose avec une lenteur désespérante, une lenteur à vomir.* (*Œuvres*, 118)

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[48] Even though Apollinaire uses a poetic didascalie in 1917, it is still for stageability. The balloons, rubber balls, costumes, all loaded poetic signs, but still materially possible to exist in a performance. This is where Artaud's didascalic poetic differs from Apollinaire's in the "unstageability" of his directions.

[49] Puchner describes Artaud's vision for his new theatrical language as an "animated hieroglyph." He claims that "Artaud holds on to a more primitivist understanding of hieroglyphics that is connected to his hope to resurrect a 'language lost since the fall of the tower of Babel.' . . . Artaud's reference to the origin of language, however, is in the service of gathering the contradictory attributes with which he operates and of effecting their impossible union: a speech that is not articulate; a writing that is not fixed; a language that is not conventional" (204, 205). Puchner's reading of Artaud's hieroglyph corresponds to Rancière's view of the hieroglyph as empowered with mute speech that according to his theory is fixed to the page, or petrified, but is not fixed in space and can travel freely, while also disrupting conventions of representation.

Numerous poetic devices are evident in this didascalic prose poem. For example, we find similes of “comme le bruit” and “comme s'ils tombaient.” Didascalie is meant to be concrete for its traditional role in maintaining the unities of time and space to create verisimilitude that supports the diegesis. Artaud deliberately breaks from verisimilitude through the use of simile that pluralizes definition through creating associations. Another frequent poetic device is the hyperbole of the direction, that is, an exaggeration of the possibilities of setting, for example, staging a hurricane to separate the young man and woman, or making a frog and beetle move with a desperate slowness. Thirdly, the rapid enumeration of body parts and architectural forms increases a repetition of sound to contrast the staged silence of the beginning and the slowness of the falling. Furthermore, enumeration is an example of Artaud's “enchainement des signifiants” that Bouthers-Paillart states is meant to give structure and body to his destructive vision. The abundance of materials (body parts, masks, buildings) contrasts the emptiness (“vide”). Artaud reinforces antithesis through juxtaposing silence/emptiness with a plurality of forms and sounds. This antithesis is meant to destabilize the material support of didascalie to undermine its traditional purpose and thus challenge its function in drama.

Perhaps in our age of digital multimedia this type of vision could be staged, but certainly not in 1925. Artaud deliberately challenges the conventions of staging and theater, to not only offer a parody of Salacrou's text, but a parody of dramatic text in general. He forces and expands the didascalie beyond any real possibility of conventional use, while also challenging the imagination of the reader to set the scene, and thus disturbing the traditional function of the mode. His literary and textual didascalie thus

presents an interesting paradox that continues with *Les Cenci*. Artaud determinedly calls for the overthrow of text-based theater in his manifestos. However, his highly stylized didascalie only enhances the textuality of the drama. I believe this is purposeful and fits directly with his intention of breaking conventions. Artaud is stretching and filling the didascalie in such a way that it almost pops, explodes, and vomits out ("à vomir") these falling forms of dislocation (body parts, broken columns, masks, etc.). In this first didascalie, he determines his vision of how to break, fragment, or dissolve theater through violently filling the stage direction with poetic device, substance, command, and text. He is stuffing the didascalie so full of 'textuality' that it breaks its convention meant to support the diegesis, and thus further disrupts the genre of theater and its modes of expression.

Another expansive direction augments an aesthetic of violence in the brief one act play. The direction reads:

> *Elle mord dieu au poignet. Un immense jet de sang lacère la scène, et on voit au milieu d'un éclair plus grand que les autres le prêtre qui fait le signe de la croix. Quand la lumière se refait, tous les personnages sont morts et leurs cadavres gisent de toutes parts sur le sol. Il n'y a que le jeune homme et la maquerelle qui se mangent des yeux. La maquerelle tombe dans les bras du jeune homme.* (120)

An amplified and hyperbolic vision for staging continues as he commands the biting of the fist of God and the infamous spurt of blood referenced in the title. The reader also finds more poetic devices, such as alliteration in the phrase "lacère la scène." This association, made through alliteration between the violent verb of cutting and the stage itself, gives presence to the stage in order to inflict violence upon its form. In this

way, the *dieu* who is bitten is perhaps the direction, or the director, either of which could be read as godlike through their all-powerful command of time, space, character, and movement in the scene. Furthermore, the direction calls for the priest to make the sign of the cross, exemplifying a poetic relation between content and form, which is the ritualized gesture of the priest in the space of gesture that is the didascalie. This staging of a bleeding God and a sign of the cross, establishes the space of direction as one of critique to undermine power structures, in this case, religion and its expression in ritualized gesture. In the second 'strophe' of the direction we find a presence of death ("cadavres") in the context of an erotic, bodily and digestive phrase ("se mangent des yeux.") The erotic is confirmed in the third strophe when the Madame falls in the arms of the young man. From this close reading, we can regard this direction as a three-part poem. First, there is violence inflicted on the stage itself, the one who commands, and the form of direction. Secondly, this violence renders a presence of death and annihilation. Thirdly, an erotics indicative of sex and union. In this way, we can view his method of poetics of cruelty taking form. The stage direction determines the aesthetics of menace that can disrupt or dissolve literary forms in order to provoke an awakening in a oneness of the *posture unitaire* of the one act play.

In 1925, Artaud begins to develop his own version of a *théâtre sur le théâtre*. His play is a staging of an aesthetic system that employs didascalie as a poetical space to express a theory of theater. Through poetic devices he can give structure, body, and presence to his system so that he can exhibit this to his reader. That is the nature of the unstageability of this one act play that foreshadows the action speech of his manifestos

and his tragedy. His textual theater is not meant for performance, or diegesis, but rather to communicate how changes to literary forms, in this case his poeticizing of didascalie, can annihilate convention and bring forth the "blood" of God that is theatrical tradition, or any power structure. However, the violence is eroticized to indicate a desire for creation and union, and not just destruction. The violent rhetoric in the stage direction works to establish a feeling of menace associated with the content of the play, which is the cataclysmic love between the young girl and the *jeune homme*, a love described as "inceste." In this way, we can read his "Jet de sang" as a step towards *Les Cenci,* that is a theoretical theater of menace to disrupt theatrical conventions and disturb the reader to force them to new places of thought and experience beyond conventional expression. However, there is not the political subtext in "Jet de Sang" as there is in the *Cenci*, that is not only a story of incest, but one of power struggle between Count and Pope, as well as a revolt against despotism, injustice, and authority. Although Artaud inflicts sexualized violence on theatrical form in "Jet de Sang," he is not trying to provoke a politics like he does with the *Cenci* ten years later. In this way, I would not call "Jet de Sang" aesthetic activism, although it demonstrates components of Artaud's poetics of cruelty.

Reading the Poetics of Cruelty in *Les Cenci*

After the dissolution of the Théâter Alfred Jarry,[50] Artaud's desire to influence the theatrical scene grew. He worked to hone his theatrical vision, publish it via essays and

[50] For more information on this subject consult Jannarone's essay "The Theater before its double: Artaud directs in the Alfred Jarry Theater."

presentations, and try every means possible to gather funding for a production of his theater of cruelty. After several years of failed attempts due to donor/collaborator mistrust and bad luck, Artaud was finally able to develop a *mise en scène* text, gather a troupe of actors, and rent a performance space. Artaud describes his return to the Parisian stage as "Les Cenci, qui seront joués aux Folies-Wagram à partir du 6 mai prochain, ne sont pas encore le Théâtre de la Cruauté, mais ils le préparent" (639). Martin Puchner applies Artaud's quote to reduce the academic merit of *Les Cenci* as "not a realization of the Theater of Cruelty but only a tentative anticipation of it" (203). Puchner references Artaud's quote to support his argument concerning the manifesto as Artaud's paramount theatrical space. However, it is important to read this quote, taken from an interview in a literary periodical, not as the voice of theoretician or director. In this text, Artaud speaks as promoter. This is a different voice, not often critically examined, but one that reinforces the plurality of voice and tone that permeates Artaud's *Œuvres*. Artaud is playing to the journalistic audience with rhetoric of anticipation to enhance and promote the spectacle as the preparation for what is to come. Puchner states that the Cenci text "seems to contradict all the dogmas commonly ascribed to the theater of cruelty" (203). I agree that the *Cenci*, loaded with poetic device and textuality, seems to contradict Artaud's desire for a gestural theater liberated from the control of text. However, in this section, I explore the role of the various modes of dramatic text to understand his larger aesthetic aim that seeks to employ textuality to enhance his gestural poetics as well as a feeling of menace associated with despotic structures. As in the "Jet de Sang," by

enhancing the textuality of stage direction, Artaud devalues the role of the dialogic mode in theatrical performance, thus achieving one of the main tenets of the theater of cruelty.

Artaud's first paratexte sets the work as "tragédie en quatre actes et dix tableaux d'après Shelley et Stendhal" (601). This paratexte functions as a didascalie to give presence to certain information that the reader must be aware of before reading the text, almost as a very brief preface. First, the genre of tragedy not only situates the work in a tradition but also speaks to the contemporary moment, as Artaud states in a "texte-manifeste:" "[d]ans une époque tragique entre toutes mais où personne n'est plus à la hauteur de la tragédie, j'ai voulu essayer de ramener à la scène le vieil esprit des héros" (643). His choice of the tragedy corresponds to his contemporary moment in the 1930's, one that, in his view, needs a heroic spirit to save it from impending destruction.[51] Secondly, the numeration of four acts and ten tableaux presents an even number and thus symmetry indicative of equal parts of the whole that echoes the *posture unitaire*. Moreover, the term *tableaux*[52] increases the importance of the visual, and in terms of the

[51] Corvin agrees about the manic and paranoid state of Artaud as he suggests that letters around the Cenci production indicate that "le monde va mal; il est à la veille d'une apocalypse qui va libérer des forces longtemps comprimées" (32).

[52] In the *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel* (1757) and the *Discours de la poésie dramatique* (1758) Denis Diderot first articulated the concept of the dramatic *tableau*. Diderot's spokesperson, Dorval, presents the stage *tableau* as a scenic device that he defines as "une disposition [des] personnages sur la scène, si naturelle et si vraie, que, rendue fidèlement par un peintre, elle me plairait sur la toile" (4:1136). In *L'Esthétique du tableau dans le théâtre du XVIIIe siècle* Pierre Frantz examines the background to Diderot's choice of term (9-12). In the context of poetics, the word *tableau* was a synonym for the rhetorical category of hypotyposis, defined by Quintilian as "the expression in words of a given situation in such a way that it seems to be a matter of seeing rather than of hearing" (4:57). In her article "From Prose peinture to Dramatic Tableau" Romira Worvill claims "this vivid and visual manner of describing intensifies the reader's sense of being present to the scene or object, and brings about deeper imaginative and emotional involvement" (151). She continues "for Diderot, however, it is precisely the appeal to the senses embodied in the stage *tableau* that confers on drama the power fully to engage the imagination and the emotions of the spectators, and thus render them more susceptible to the moral and improving intentions of the play" (152). Artaud, Sade, and Genet in *le Balcon*, prefer the term *tableau* to continue this

textual theater, the *ut pictura poesis* and ekphrastics of his didascalic poetics. Finally, he references Shelley and Stendhal to place his work (and himself) in a literary tradition. These references set his drama in a dialogic framework that is necessary to establish communication with traditional forms of narrative and drama. If he staged his own unique, brand new story, there would be no foil with which to compare his manipulation of forms, and thus no tension. Artaud, like most of the avant-garde, needed a foundation in tradition in order for an aesthetic activism to function.

In the first scenes, the spoken dialogue establishes the intrigue so the audience can reasonably follow a narrative. One could even read the dialogue like a didascalie as it establishes the space, time, and character, and, in this sense, even the dialogic mode expresses conventions of the didascalic. In the first scene, the direction sets the space as "*Une galerie en profondeur et en spirale. Camillo et Cenci entrent en conversant*" (602). The direction is standard, as are the few stage directions found in this scene. They typically indicate setting and physical movement without any enhanced, poetic significance. The first two scenes define the main characters involved in the incest narrative: first the Count Cenci and secondly his daughter Béatrice. In scene three, Artaud's stage directions become more dynamic to render the work less a closet drama like Shelley's[53] and more of a production plan or scenario. The expanded directions use a

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tradition that exemplifies the use of drama's power over the senses, in this case the visual, in order to deliver an idea or feeling.

[53] Puchner describes Shelley's work as a "romantic closet drama" that is a surprising, yet meaningful choice. Although Puchner claims that the drama undermines the theater of cruelty, as stated above, the choice offers "surprising connections between the theater of cruelty and the antitheatrical closet drama" that "can be fathomed from Artaud's fascination with another writer of closet drama, namely, Seneca. . . . The reading of closet drama and the theater of cruelty are being set side by side because they share a desire for the 'metaphysical'" (203). As we see in the analysis, this tension between closet drama and action theater is

plurality of theatrical properties including visual, sound, and gestural effects. These work with the narrative to enhance the menace of Cenci, who seeks the deaths of his sons, the sexual possession of his daughter, and his complete dissolution of self through crime to become legend.

Act 1 Scene 3, Creating Menace

In the third scene of the first act, the Count Cenci commands his entire family (labeled as *convives*) to be present to witness his power and menace. His control over the scene and the family is representative of directorial control to establish a link between Cenci the character and Artaud's director. One must remember that in the 1935 production Artaud acted the part of the Count, and this reinforces the association of Cenci and director. This is why Jannarone views Artaud's director as a despotic figure. Yet through the analysis between Cenci and Béatrice one can reach a further understanding of his theater, not just focused on the director, but also the other agents involved. In the third scene Cenci receives the news of his sons' deaths. He also concludes the scene with a declaration of his sexual intentions toward his daughter. The didascalie that opens this third scene of Act 1 presents the first example of an Artaudian didascalic poetic, similar to the extensive directions in the "Jet de Sang." The opening direction reads:

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similar to the metaphysical feeling of menace related to the incest conflict, but also the conflict between dialogic and didascalic modes. Artaud does not favor one or the other, he needs both modes to create the force of his cruelty, just as he needs the textual closet drama and the didascalic poetics to produce the tensions for his action speech.

Cenci, Camillo, Béatrice, Lucrétia, des convives parmi lesquels le prince Colonna; des mannequins en assez grand nombre.

La scène évoque a peu près les Noces de Cana, mais en beaucoup plus barbare. Des rideaux pourpres volent au vent, retombent en plis lourds sur les murailles. Et tout à coup, sous un rideau soulevé, éclate une scène d'orgie furieuse, peinte comme en trompe l'œil.

Les cloches de Rome sonnent à toute volée, mais en sourdine, en accord avec le rythme tourbillonnant du festin.

Les voix s'amplifient, prenant la tonalité grave ou suraigue et comme clarifiée des cloches. De temps en temps un son volumineux s'étale et fuse, comme arrêté par un obstacle qui le fait rejaillir en arêtes aiguisées. (607)

I read this direction like a strophic prose poem. In the first stanza, the enumeration of the names, recalls the enumeration of body parts and broken forms from "Jet de Sang" and renders the characters as props for the director to dehumanize through dislocation. This effect is confirmed in the second part of the sentence with the phrase "*des mannequins en assez grand nombre*." Alain Virmaux examines in the Alfred Jarry Theater, how Artaud employs mannequins to establish "disproportion--or *démesure*--to create the décalage between the living actor and the mannequin, between the moving flesh and the immobile object" (Jannarone, 260). This gap between actor and dummy intends to create separation between meaning and signifier to disrupt theatrical language.[54] The giant props and dummies seen in the Alfred Jarry Theater work are indicative of Artaud's concepts for performance. I believe the intended use of difference

[54] Kimberly Jannarone describes Artaud's use of props and staging as "the mise-en-scène helps us to establish more general principles of Artaud's directing. All of his Jarry Theater productions and projects dealt in elements hugely disproportional and concrete, in dissonances and denatures objects (...) The mattresses in *Partage* functioned in the realm of what Alain Virmaux terms *démesure* and what Dumoulié terms *décalages*--objects out of proportion that create gaps or lags, temporal disruptions. In Artaud's works, these devices function both physically and psychologically. Dissonant elements clear the theater of falsity; *objets violemment vrais* are used and seen as such" (256). This use of living actor and prop or mannequin to create tension and gaps on stage parallels the tensions and gaps created between the dialogic silences or screaming and the didascalic chaos or absence of movement. The use of démesure is also found in Genet's drama *Le Balcon* that is the subject of the third chapter of the dissertation.

extends to his text where the reader finds throughout the drama disproportion between dialogic and didascalic modes, as well as gaps between loss of speech and extensive gestural movement. For example, in this third scene, the mannequins create an association with the actors as a "blocked," restrained object of silenced expression. The mannequins convey a silence and motionlessness that extends to the actors, the *convives* of the Cenci family, and the audience. Through this poetic of props Artaud highlights the restraining of the witness who is forced to hear the crimes and is powerless, like the mannequin, to stop it. Through his use of props, Artaud populates this scene with dehumanized objects, stripped of their expression by Cenci, who is a figure for patriarchal power as well as a commanding director.

In the second stanza, the reader understands the importance of image. In terms of the visual, Artaud invokes painting, specifically the *Noces de Canna* by Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese. This reference works to parody religion by making an association between the criminal *orgie furieuse* of Cenci, and the wedding where Jesus performed his miracle of transubstantiation. The reference to painting establishes a dynamic between the staging of the scene and the reader. Artaud frames the scene as "*peinte comme en trompe l'oeil*" to reinforce the reader's position via the scene as separated witness like a viewer in front of a painting. This corresponds to the powerless, dehumanized mannequins to enhance a sense of separation and distance for the reader. Moreover, the syllabic augmentation of the "verse" corresponds to a growing sense of disturbance read in the sequential didascalic lines "*et tout à coup*" [4], "*sous un rideau soulevé*" [7], "*éclate une scène d'orgie furieuse*" [10]. There is a gradual, systematic 3-

syllable augmentation of each dramatic phrasing. Through this increase in syllabic number to describe a scene characterized by powerlessness and separation, Artaud increases the dimensions of the scene to further distance the reader and enhance the overall scope of the *orgie*. This distance is meant to invoke the powerlessness of the reader in front of a sublime spectacle of menace, to render them as traumatized witness.

If the second stanza relies heavily on a visual effect of presence through painting and mannequin, then the third and fourth stanzas are more indicative of sound design.[55] According to contemporary reports, in the production, the sound effects and music by Roger Desormière had the most influence over the audience, and were the most critically received as being innovative. To focus on the sound design in the textual mode, in the didascalie he writes: "*Les cloches de Rome sonnent à toute volée, mais en sourdine, en accord avec le rythme tourbillonnant du festin*." The first part of the phrase [Les cloches...volée] is an alexandrine, and the tolling of the bells is meant to mimic the repetitive rhythm of the traditional French form. Artaud is deliberate in his silencing, or muting, of poetic convention by reducing the sound of the alexandrine and the bells with "*mais en sourdine*." He is turning down the volume on the traditional French verse

[55] In order to produce this on the stage, Artaud used recordings of the bells from the Cathedral in Chartres, played over loudspeakers. His positioning of the speakers represents the theatrical debut of surround sound. Adrian Curtin's article "Cruel Vibrations: Sounding Out Antonin Artaud's Production of Les Cenci" presents a thorough analysis of Artaud's sound design. According to Curtin, it was not necessarily sound effect that was Artaud's intention, but vibration and rhythm, which he claims Artaud discovered from Balinese theater. According to Curtin, Artaud sought to produce a communal rhythm in the crowd to affect a trance important to the role of the director as shaman or seer. Curtin's analysis uses audience and journalism testimony of the event to conclude that "despite Artaud's intent, the audiences of *Les Cenci* could not be attuned to a collective 'wavelength': there were too many potential distortions of meaning, too many signal carriers that could refer to the sounds both inside and outside the theater" (259). Curtin's conclusions concerning Artaud's failure to produce his intended communal effect are related to Artaud's staging of the play in the Folies Wagram operetta theater, with which Jannarone agrees, was one of the major hindrances that led to the failure of the play due to the theater's "utter unsuitability" (Jannarone, 162) to match his vision.

structure. The silencing of the alexandrine contrasts the amplification of more wild and new tones to create a unique sound design that enhances an antithetical, disturbing, and destabilizing poetic effect: "*les voix s'amplifient*," "*la tonalité grave ou suraigue*," "*un son volumineux*." His textual sound design liberates his ideas from the unsuitability of performance space. In the text, deep-tolling bells can meet sour violins, amplification, whispers, and cackling laughter, to enhance a sonic atmosphere of menace. Artaud's contradictory sound design that matches "en sourdine" with "s'amplifier" creates discord. Yet in this discord, there is an ideal of unity that speaks to Artaud's often contradictory method, that Jannarone calls "synthesis and apocalypse" (148) or awakening through annihilation. The dinner party is described as a "festin" to demonstrate a celebration or a coming together. The direction signals discord through sound, but also union with "Noces de Canna," "festin," and "orgie." In consideration of this union, the stage directions in this scene work with the performed dialogue to attune the reader to Cenci as a figure of menace "*en accord avec le rythme tourbillonnant*." Another direction in this scene reads "L'*oeil provocant du vieux comte Cenci fait lentement le tour de la salle*" (608). There is no distinction as to which *salle* he examines, and in this way, his menacing eye, also the eye of the director, and the all seeing eye of authoritarian power, surveys the diegetic space of the family but also the extradiegetic stage, audience, and reader. The stage directions work to dissolve boundaries to create a *posture unitaire* between the diegesis and the extra-diegetic reading, as well as between the modes of dialogic and didascalic language.

This dissolution is staged in the drama when the structure of the party, as well as the strophic structure of directions, break down to a chaotic and haphazard rush of movement. This corresponds to the chaotic blocking on the stage and the movements of characters. The blocking makes manifest Artaud's idealized gestural language. The word "geste" is repeated throughout the didascalie to bring presence to its importance in his theatrical system. Kimberly Jannarone describes Artaud's blocking as "dynamic," "conceived around the image of a whirlwind or vortex" and tending "to the vertiginous via the use of choreographed, constantly moving spirals" (167). Artaud uses language of physical action, force, and disorienting dizziness to present to the reader the blocking that creates his intended bodily language. There are numerous calls for movement, for example "*Les convives refluent de tous cotés en désordre. Ils piétinent, affolés, et avancent comme s'ils allaient à la bataille*" (610). Béatrice "*fait en courant le tour de la salle*" (610) described as "*le brouhaha*."[56] This chaos of movement, expressed in the material mode of stage direction, corresponds to the spoken language that expresses fear, anger, confusion, and disgust. This working together of both modes intends to establish a material essence of movement to enhance a feeling of menace and disturbance that corresponds to the incest narrative, while also showing how gesture becomes an expressive poetic to convey meaning. The stage direction "*Cenci fait le geste de lever la main sur elle*" (610) highlights the Count's violence and power through his gestures in the directions. The gesture of his raising his hand to strike her also evokes the idea of the

[56] The etymology of the term brouhaha - from the 16th century "interjective attribuée au diable, destinée à inspirer la terreur" - reveals not only the chaos on stage, but the purpose of the gestural poetic that involves motions of bodies intended to inspire terror and violence. *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi, ATILF - CNRS & Université de Lorraine.

material phallus that desires to penetrate her. When he raises his hand the direction also states "*Ici toute la foule, comme si elle avait reçu un grand coup de poing dans l'estomac, respire et exhale un grand cri, puis elle s'élance en désordre vers toutes les sorties*" (610). The body expresses violence through the gesture of receiving a punch to the stomach as well as the deep sigh and scream. The *convives* are to be traumatized in such a way that they can no longer speak structured language. They can only express fear through bodily communication delivered via breathing and screaming. These examples work to give body, and thus a material presence, to the unspeakable and traumatic violence of his crime, while also alluding to the potential for a new gestural poetics in the mute speech of didascalie.

However, in this scene, it is not necessarily the movement of the bodies that predominates, but the non-movement or the actual 'blocking' of bodies through stopping them. This action reinforces the menace and power through a poetic association that connects the family with the silenced and blocked state of the mannequins. Both Cenci and Béatrice show their power by blocking the bodies of the *convives* in the space of the *salle* and refusing exit. Cenci uses dialogic lyric to state "à vos places, ou pas un homme vivant ne sortira d'ici" (610) while Béatrice speaks mutely with the direction as "*leur barrant la sortie*" (610). In this scene from Act 1, Artaud begins to establish associations between the Count as a figure for the despotic power of discourse, while Béatrice becomes a figure for the mute action speech of the didascalie. In terms of the action of blocking with the verb "*barrer*," Hans Gumbrecht's presence-based definition of power works well to clarify Artaud's gestural poetics here. For the critic, power is conceived as

"the potential of occupying spaces with bodies, and violence as the actualization of power, that is, power as performance or event" (114). Through blocking bodies on stage and in the text, both Cenci demonstrate their power. Artaud associates this power with the formal aspects of dramatic performance, spoken speech for Cenci and mute speech for Béatrice. Furthermore, it is not only the count and the daughter who employ the gesture of "barrer." The step-mother Lucrétia tries to stop the Count and the servant Andréa tries to stop Béatrice, but both fail, indicated in the directions as "*Lucrétia fait mine de barrer la route à Cenci. Béatrice lui fait de la tête signe de n'en rien faire*" and "*Andréa, qui suit les mouvements de son maître, fait le geste de barrer la route à Béatrice*" (611). This gestural movement ("*le geste de barrer*") and its corresponding failure ("*signe de n'en rien faire*") establish a power hierarchy through didascalic gesture. Based on who allows whom any movement on the stage, we can determine the power hierarchy with the Count as supreme authority that can block all, followed by Béatrice, then Lucrétia, and then the servant. Although Béatrice is powerless to stop the menace of her father, she does have agency to command others and a power of her own. This creates an association between the two as the powerful figures in the narrative, but also, in a metatextual way, the figures of the activist system: Count as despotic discursive tradition and Béatrice as activist agent. Their gravitational movements circle each other and represent the inevitable catastrophe that is central to Artaud's vision of awakening through annihilation.

In his sound design and gestural movement, Artaud establishes antithesis to create a poetic force. The chaotic movements of the characters contrast the stillness at the end of the scene. Once the *convives* have escaped, the reader finds Cenci and Béatrice alone on

the stage while "*un calme inoui tombe sur la scène*" (611). Béatrice has changed as well, from the frightened child chased around the hall to a calm state where "*elle respire maintenant une sorte de grande émotion sereine*" (611). Sound works to enhance a feeling of her calm state through the effect of "*un son de viole vibre très légèrement et très haut*" (611). However the instrument of the *viole* could also signify *le viol* that awaits her. This plurality of meaning, involved in the poetic use of language indicative of sound, signals the 'calm before the storm' that augments the menace of Cenci through didascalic language. The reader arrives at the moment when desire manifests in physical movement as "*Cenci prend la coupe et esquisse le geste de passer la main sur la chevelure de Béatrice*" (612). Her calm changes to "*un immense affolement*" as "*Béatrice qui avançait la tête, la retire d'un coup violemment*" (612). The violent movement, characterized by an abrupt change from serenity to insanity, destabilizes the reader and heightens the menace surrounding the incest narrative. Artaud's directions communicate the intended meaning of menace through the gestural language as seen in the phrases "*esquisse le geste de passer la main"* (612) and "*avançait la tête, la retire d'un coup violemment*." Artaud uses a poetics of unspoken gesture to create a metaphysical force to affect the reader.

Certainly, dialogic performance guides the scene and the narrative, but it is the non-spoken, didascalic sonic, visual, and gestural poetics that create the aesthetic force to destabilize both audience and reader. Furthermore, the didascalie attunes them to Cenci's menace and Béatrice's confused position that refers to the tension between the mute power of action and the traumatized silence of powerlessness. This method is confirmed as the scene ends. Cenci makes the gesture that signifies his intentions ("*le geste de*

passer la main") while Béatrice becomes action: "*À la fin elle bondit dehors comme si elle avait tout à fait compris*" (612). Her lyric silence signals the extent of her trauma, but also reinforces her expression of escape through the mute poetics of direction. She can only express any form of escape through the action of stage direction. This enhances the expressive potential of the didascalie as a poetic space for his theoretical cruelty. As Forbes' and Vork's readings of *Les Cenci* show, the unstated act, represented by loss of speech, suggests the effect of trauma, when language is incapable of expressing the reality of horror bound to the incest narrative. In her gesture of escape "*bondit dehors*" we find a loaded commentary on her situation. Artaud infuses a poetics of expression in the conventionally unspoken didascalie. Béatrice understands her father's intentions, manifested in his gesture of caressing her hair. She responds to his gesture not with dialogic lyric, but with didascalic action by jumping out of the scene without confronting her father through discourse. Artaud undermines the communicative quality of lyric while finding the necessary means to stage her trauma ("affolement") as a material condition. This is meant to enhance the reader's feeling of menace, and the powerlessness of her situation. In doing so, Artaud can also offer the reader a glimpse of Béatrice's agency. She can escape through the mode of the didascalie. In terms of poetic form, one can escape the despotic lyric of traditional psychological theater through the gestural poetic that is an action speech.

In contrast, Cenci speaks a power discourse. He is the cause of trauma, and not the traumatized witness, and therefore, he is able to speak to his actions as he states "Laisse le charme opère. Désormais elle ne peut m'échapper" (612). Here in the first Act,

even if she leaves the stage and "unblocks" her body from the scene, as she did through the gesture of "*bondit,*" Béatrice cannot escape the all encompassing power and authority of the Count, who seeks to charm her like an evil wizard. Just as Béatrice cannot escape her fate, that is her father, the audience cannot escape the control of the director. Jannarone states "Artaud envisions the spectator: as a victim, as a mesmerized or charmed subject, as a body that must be assaulted by all available means" (169). Jannarone's characterization of Artaud's audience is actually the perfect description of Béatrice in this scene: "charmed" by the Count and assaulted on all sides. Therefore, in the first Act, we gain an understanding of Artaud's poetic system by examining this relation between Cenci and Béatrice. I read their relation as representative of not just the dynamic between director and audience, but also the textual dynamics of dialogic and didascalic poetical modes. Cenci is power structure intent on assaulting through voiced command, while Béatrice is agent of action speech seeking liberation from her role as object.

In the opening scene of Act 1 Cenci states with regards to his daughter, his own creation "Je torturai l'âme en profitant du corps" (604). This citation equally reflects Artaud's purpose for his drama. By enhancing feelings of disturbance, menace and chaos via theatrical properties of appearance sound and gesture, Artaud wants to torture (metaphysically) the soul of the victim: the defiled daughter who is also the reader. His poetics of cruelty stimulate unsettling feelings through antithesis, parody, and *décalage* in the stage directions to affect the reader via aesthetics of menace. This feeling of menace is purposeful to enhance the disturbing situation of the incest that challenges the very

structure of the family. The crime of incest is used to evoke an idea, and thus becomes an effective poetic figure to convey symbolic meaning. Central to the crime of incest is the prized possession: the female body of Béatrice. In Act 1, Artaud shows that her body is restrained by the control of her father, much as the reader is restrained by the control of the text. Yet they have a route of escape outside, although, as the tragedy continues to show, there is no outside escape from the menace of destructive desires.

Act 2 Scene 1, the traumatized witness

In the scene that follows the chaos of the dinner party, Béatrice seeks consolation with Lucrétia, her stepmother who contends "Je ne suis pas ta mère mais je t'aime plus que ta mère" (612). The fact that Lucrétia is her stepmother further complicates the Cenci dynamic, while reinforcing the figure of a traumatized witness. Lucrétia represents a figure for the reader who, like the *convives* in the third scene of Act 1, exists as powerless voyeur forced to witness the tableau of the incest narrative. As the drama progresses, the public gets closer to the action: first as members of the chaotic group of *convives,* and then as empathic but dislocated witness like Lucrétia in the second Act. Her role in the narrative is evident in her questioning "Lui céder? Mais enfin qu'a t-il pu oser?" (613) that shows her ignorance of the truth to further distance her from the incest. Moreover, if Lucrétia were her blood mother, Cenci's incestuous desire would take on a crueler significance due to the forcing of the blood mother to watch her husband lust for her creation. However, the complete absence in the text of any reference to Béatrice's blood

mother molds the incest in a unique way. The absence of the mother renders Cenci figuratively as her sole creator, and thus offers a relation of not only father/daughter, but also artist and creation, author and text, and director and production. This relation reinforces a connection between the crime of incest and the drama, on levels of content and form. In this way, Artaud establishes the crime as a metatextual figure for the tensions between the internal modes of drama, specifically the didascalic and lyric, that when mixing from within, like an incest, can dissolve boundaries and break conventions.

In the first scene of the second act, the didascalie, conventionally sets the setting of the bedroom:

> *Une chambre dans le Palais Cenci*.
> *Au milieu de la chambre un grand lit*. (612)

Strikingly, the didascalie is written in a decasyllabe couplet of *rime pauvre*. The material conditions of the didascalic mode not only set the space as bedroom and palace, but they also give a material structure to fixed poetic. Within this fixed structure, the reader finds Béatrice confined. Via the rhyme scheme, Artaud links the Cenci name to the bed to suggest the incest. Moreover, the palace and the repetition of *chambre* enhance a feeling of enclosed space. The Cenci name and the bed are thus linked to this enclosed space to signify that the menace of incest encloses her. But since Artaud employs syllabic lines and rhyme in the didascalie, his text furthers the connection of enclosed, restrained space to include fixed poetic structure. In doing so, Artaud creates a menacing and oppressive architecture around Béatrice's tragic and inescapable situation. Another fixed

poetic form continues in the didascalie that follows, arranged in four octosyllabic measures. I divide the lines thusly:

> *Lucrétia prend entre ses mains, / la tête de Béatrice. Silence.*
> *Dehors des oiseaux crient. Il y a / très haut, comme le bruit d'un pas.* (613)

In the first line, the female body is central as detailed by the connection between the hands and the face. There is an antithesis between the silence at the end of the line and the sounds of the birds that start the second. In finishing the line with silence, Artaud stages another muting of a fixed poetic line that recalls the alexandrine line of the tolling bells. This silence contrasts with the noise of the birds outside, and with this juxtaposition, the poet calls attention to the outside of freedom, sound, nature and innocence beyond the menacing architecture of the palace, the fixed poetic structure in the stage directions, and the objectified body that is a prison in its own right. This alludes to an ideal of liberation or escape in free space suggested by "dehors" and "très haut." To escape the unspeakable act of incestuous rape, perhaps there is a place above, outside of the violent constraints of form that are both the palace and the poetic structure. However, Béatrice's hopes are crushed by the “bruit d'un pas” which is also brought into presence through the deictic: “il y a.” The footstep, the sound effect, but also the “pas” or foot of measured arrangement in choreography and poetics, belongs to the father. By employing the material conditions of the didascalic mode, Artaud calls attention to structures like the prop of the bed, the space of the palace, and the sound of the footstep to infuse fixed poetic form with a material significance. Poetic structure becomes a thing that he can

stage via the didascalic mode to call the reader's attention to its oppressive structure and its menace.

In calling the reader's attention to the poetical qualities of the stage directions, Artaud incites the reader to speak them out loud and thus shift the mute aspect of the didascalie to a spoken mode of lyric. This corresponds to the lyric quality of the dialogic mode in which Béatrice describes the sound of the footstep to lament:

> Oh! ce pas qui remplit les murailles. Son pas- Je le vois comme
> s'il était là: sa face épouvantable s'éclaire. Je dois le haïr et je ne peux pas.
> Son image est en moi comme un crime que je porterais. (613)

Since his crime is her crime, and his image is in her, there is an establishment of a *posture unitaire* between the father and the daughter. In comparison, by infusing the didascalic mode with lyric qualities, Artaud extends this union to include both modes. In this way, there is an association between the Cenci and the modes of the drama. This establishes the metatextual reading, that their dynamic, and the incest narrative, represents aspects of Artaud's theatrical form. To recall Evelyne Grossman's quote above, Artaud seeks a "force de dissolution des particularismes individuels" with the *posture unitaire* related to the genres of tragedy and myth. We can then understand that through linking the modes with the Cenci characters, Artaud seeks to dissolve traditional theater and offer the awakening of a new theater of a didascalic, or directorial poetics, of gesture that expresses action against or away from despotic power.

If her action was to escape in the first Act, her action in the second Act is one of desperation "*Béatrice se précipite affolée sur la scène*" (613). Her agony is expressed in an alexandrine stage direction "*Elle se tord les mains et sanglote de plus belle*" (613).

This enhances the poetic quality of the didascalie, while also devaluing the expression of the dialogic mode as she does not speak, but can only wail. As the directions express her desperation, the menace that was an abstraction represented via sound effect and enclosed walls, takes a material form as the Count enters the scene.

> *Cenci vient d'entrer dans l'appartement*
> Béatrice: Ah!
> *Cenci, qui s'avançait vers Bernardo, aperçoit tout d'un coup Béatrice.*
> Cenci – Ah!
> *Puis, comme s'il s'apprêtait à prendre une décision grave, il pousse un nouveau Ah!*
> Ah!
> *Béatrice dans un coin tremble comme une biche et esquisse, mais sans s'y résoudre, le geste de se précipiter dehors.* (614)

This part of the scene exemplifies Artaud's use of a didascalic poetics of mute speech that create the force of menace needed to metaphysically affect the reader. The back and forth between stage direction "*Ah*" and spoken "Ah!" further enhances the expressive function of the didascalic mode.[57] The "Ah!" is loaded with meaning to enhance the menace by stripping language of any psychological expression or discourse to just become a monosyllabic utterance that expresses both lust and fear. This utterance, like the silences that permeate the drama, signifies the unspeakable crime of incest, the menace of Cenci who is oppressive structure, and the trauma it induces in the characters, and by extension, the reader.

One understands that with the arrival of Cenci, the crime of incest arrives as well. There is a clear staging of an erotic here that foreshadows the crime through the material

[57] Moreover, the doubling of the Ah ! between the modes makes a poetic reference. The single "Ah" is perhaps a reference to Jarry's *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien,* where there is a monkey who can only say "ah !" Tzara doubles the line to invent "Monsieur A-A." So, in this association of stage directions and dialogic lines, there is an effect of poetic reference, indicating the poetic genealogy leading up to Artaud's work.

language of the didascalie. The verbs "*entrer dans*" and "*pousse*" signal the possibility of the phallus entering the space wherein the female body is blocked. As the material world of the didascalie meets the dramatic narrative of the incest, both modes of the material and the diegetic collide and Cenci makes the decision to commit the crime ("*comme s'il s'apprêtait à prendre une décision grave*"). As soon as this decision happens in the material mode of the direction, it is almost as if the crime is committed, once again signaling the expressive quality of the didascalie as a space of action, criminal in this case. Here in the second Act, the activist agent Béatrice is still an object restrained, and her action to escape fails, even though action fills her body and she trembles in a corner. This suggests that she wants to escape, as the poetics associate her name "Béatrice" through rhyme with the action of escape "*esquisse*." The rhyme indicates the poetic language of the didascalie to enhance the expression of fear through gesture and action. However, the didascalie also establishes the powerlessness of inaction as she cannot accomplish the gesture of escape: "*mais sans s'y resoudre, le geste*."

Béatrice wants to be the action speech of the gesture ("geste") to liberate herself from the constraints of forms that surround her: paternal and poetic. The force of her father's criminal lust blocks her entire being. The power structure's disturbance of her action extends to a level of syntax as the clause "*mais sans s'y resoudre*" interrupts the phrase "*esquisse...le geste de se précipiter dehors*." Béatrice desires escape indicated through the verb "se précipiter" that signals movement between different physical or chemical states. She wants to remove herself from the static, set, fixed form of her position to become more fluid, liquid, flowing, and liberated through a gestural

expression of escape and movement. However, here in the second Act, the drama's traditional fixed poetic structures prevent her from achieving this transition. The clause that prevents her escape reads “sans s'y” which, if read out loud, could also signify “Cenci.” If we follow this plurality of meaning suggested by the sound design of the didascalic line, the Count's decision is made in the stage direction, and thus adds material presence to the power and violence of blocking bodies in space. The form and syntax of the direction block her, and she is commanded to stay against her will. This plurality of meaning through sound enhances the poetic potential of the didascalie that is no longer merely silent for material support, as its traditional purpose intends. Artaud shows that it can be expressive in its muteness, or even read aloud for the purpose of infusing sounds and lyric device to enhance symbolic meaning beyond the constraints of the traditionally silent word. In the second act, Béatrice is trapped in all forms of structure: sexual, patriarchal, syntactic, tragic, dramatic, poetical and directorial.

Just as the decision to commit the crime is staged in the mute space of the didascalie, the actual rape occurs offstage in between the second and third acts, as well as in between five scenes, or tableaux. This distribution between 2 acts and 5 scenes on each ‘side’ of the drama creates a mirror effect embedded in the formal structure of the play. This mirror reflects Béatrice and the Count as well as reader and poet-director to further the *posture unitaire,* where all sides are part of the same whole achieved through dissolving boundaries and individual particularities. The mirror effect signals an inversion of a whole that echoes the incest narrative, but also theatrical form and textual modes. If one half is power structure of fixed poetic form, the other half must be an equal

but opposite power structure. Cenci is a poetic force, but so is Béatrice. This total form, this *posture unitaire* can then be understood through examining the relation between the Count and Béatrice as a force against itself. It is a staging of the alchemical ouroboros: the serpent biting its own tail. This mystic symbol of eternity is "tout ce qui agit," a *cruauté* that is no longer just the content of the diegesis, but the very form of theater meant to destroy and renew. The despotic cruelty of *Les Cenci*'s fixed verse in the first two acts becomes the activist cruelty of Béatrice's action speech in the second half.

Act 3 Scene 1, after the rape

After passing through the unspeakable crime purposefully buried in the silence between acts, Béatrice confirms the rape to her stepmother. She enters the stage in a state of desperation: "*se précipitant affolée sur la scène*" (621). The performed speech works with the stage direction to establish the menacing and unsettling effects of the incest:

> Béatrice - Cenci, mon père, m'a polluée
> *Elle s'effondre en sanglots.*
> *Lucrétia traverse la scène en faisant quatre fois le signe de la croix.* (621)

She explains her situation as syntactic object of the verb "polluer," whose subject is the Count. The verb "polluer" echoes the pronominal verb "*se précipiter*" indicated in the introductive didascalie that starts the third Act. Both verbs signal a change of state, but instead of a reflexive action like the latter it is a transitive verb in the former. Her father has rendered her dirty or contaminated. This change of state is confirmed in the next reflexive "*s'effondre*." Béatrice becomes a liquid state of tears. Yet the liquid state

also refers to the material release of liquid during the incestuous sex, like a criminal wetness. The analysis of the previous section put forth the possibility of escape through a higher plane. This becomes staged via the religious, evident in the ritualized behavior of Lucrétia "*en faisant quatre fois le signe de la croix*" which is the response of the stepmother to the verb "polluer" and the revelation of the incest. Lucrétia cannot speak to acknowledge the crime, but can only respond with the mute speech of gesture. Religious ritual then becomes the gesture of action speech for the powerless stepmother. Artaud creates an association between the religiously charged gesture and her powerlessness in the incest narrative to render the gesture as a sign of *impuissance*. Cenci's crime, and Artaud's stage direction, pollutes the women physically and metaphysically, while also polluting religion and ritual through parody, to undermine its power as a source to help the women. This powerlessness, combined with a sense of physical and metaphysical corruption, is intended to leave an unsettling feeling with the reader.

Another didascalie continues a poetic use of irony to parody religion "*Elle entoure les jambes de Lucrétia de ses bras, telle Marie-Madeleine au pied de la croix*" (622). Artaud stages another poetic device, the simile, to give presence to not only religious iconography, but also the device itself. Artaud's amplified use of traditional poetics – simile, irony, antithesis, alexandrine, internal rime, repetition, anaphor – in stage direction gives a material presence, or body, to poetic convention. He then links these conventions to the body of the performer, and in this case, the women confined to their powerlessness. He shows that poetic convention is a despotic structure that corrupts and pollutes aesthetic expression. At this point, if the physical escape of "*esquisse*," the

metaphysical hope of an "*au-delà*," and the ritualized behavior of religion all fail to help, Béatrice tries one more possible escape route: the dream. Robert Vork rightly argues that Artaud's use of dream narrative extends the cruelty of Cenci beyond reality to enhance its metaphysical force. Béatrice describes the horror she felt during a repetitive dream she had as a child in which "la bête qui se colle à moi me pourchasse de cave en cave" (622). She elaborates further that during the dream, just as she was about to give in, she would wake up and feel safe. Now the dream has become her reality. In this moment of realization, she speaks in verse form:

> Que ne puis-je croire que j'ai rêvé
> que mon rêve d'enfant m'a reprise
> et qu'une porte où l'on va frapper
> en s'ouvrant viendra me redire
> qu'il est temps de me réveiller. (622)

The despotic fixed form that frequents the didascalie has transferred via the dream narrative from the mute-loquacious stage direction to her voiced speech. In this moment, right before Béatrice plots to murder her father, she realizes that her only salvation is to transition through a door, and awaken unto a new way. The structures of her suffering are no longer limited to the mute material spaces of the text. They are spoken and now exist in diegetic reality outside of the control of the oppressive direction. This *mise en scène* reflects Artaud's preface in *L'Ombilic des limbes* where he describes his poetic vision of forcing the reader through a door "abouché à la réalité" to wake them up. When the crime becomes a spoken reality, Béatrice knows that her only escape is to wake up, confront the oppressive forces, and become the action of an activist poetics to seek the destruction of

despotic forms. But, she is not there yet, for we are only in Act 3, and Artaud's narrative is still subject to the control of dramatic structure and tragic conventions.

Act 3 Scene 2, A failed assassination

Previously, in the third scene of the second act, Orsino, Béatrice's unrequited lover, and Giacomo, Béatrice's disgraced brother, plan an assassination attempt on the Count. This attempt occurs in the second scene of the third act, as the Count and his family (Béatrice, Bernardo, and Lucrétia) walk through a storm to his enclosed fortress of Petrella, where he plans to further his evil deeds outside of the eye of Roman and Papal authority. This scene is critically recognized as being distinctively Artaudian and vastly different from Shelley's tragedy, as it is composed almost entirely of stylized stage direction with only a few, brief quips of dialogue between the two plotters, who seek to use mute assassins to carry out the murder. I read the mute assassins as a staging of the mute speech power of the didascalie that gives expressiveness to mute objects and modes for a purpose of disrupting traditional poetics of representation. This disruption is then connected to an expression of sociopolitical protest as it seeks to overthrow the despotism of the Count. However, in this scene the disruption ultimately fails, because the wrong agents controlled the mute power. Artaud shows that the didascalie is a mute assassin that can disrupt and overthrow hierarchies of representation, but it needs to be controlled by the appropriate agent of action.

The scene is reminiscent of directions in "Jet de Sang." For instance, in both, there is the presence of a violent storm as "*un ouragan les sépare en deux"* corresponds to "*un orage épouvantable se lève*" (625). There is also a deliberate slowness shared between the expressions "*une lenteur désespérante*" and "*déplaçant avec la lenteur la plus excessive*" (626). This correspondence reinforces a reading of Artaud's stage directions in both works as part of a deliberate aesthetic strategy. First, he attempts to give presence to menace through the construction of a storm via his directorial poetics that employ theatrical properties of sound and visual effects "*coups de tonnerre éclatent à intervalles très rapprochés*." An example of his gestural poetics is also present in the movement of the storm "*la tempête fait rage*" to then render the storm as another mute character who expresses action and violence. Artaud uses the language of stage direction to create a sensory experience of menace associated with the dehumanizing forces of nature embodied in the storm and the Count. Rhythm is also important to Artaud's aesthetic system. The slowness of the pace is deliberate to prolong the disturbing feeling of the scene. Artaud is using synesthesia to create a poetic experience of menace. Through his didascalic language he associates a concept of slowness of gesture with imaginary sounds of thunder, flashes of light, and even touch through the repetition of the term "rapproché." This synesthesia is meant to confirm the figure of Cenci, and the theater he represents, as a dehumanizing, menacing, gradual force of oppression moving across the drama to an inevitable crime, and a corresponding activism to subvert his control.

In conjunction with the aesthetic of menace, this scene also has a political significance concerning an assassination attempt to violently overthrow the oppressive Count, who himself is escaping the eye of the Papal authority. Through this connection, the reader understands that the didascalic poetics are an expression of oppression but can also become an expression of revolt, depending on who controls the form itself. In this scene, Artaud associates the form of the didascalie with a voice. He drops a traditional chorus, to stage a collective voice in the directions that call the Count's name into presence:

> *La tempête fait rage de plus en plus et, mêlées au vent, on entend des voix qui prononcent le nom de Cenci, d'abord, sur un seul ton prolongé et aigu, puis comme le battant d'une pendule:* Cenci, Cenci, Cenci, Cenci. (626)

In this section, the very names of the Count and Béatrice, both Cenci, are repeated by the direction as a prolonged tone of desperation, but one also indicative of fate and destiny, like the tolling of bells or the ticking of a clock. Catherine Bouthers-Paillart states that the repetition of proper names in Artaud's poetry is a method to "constituer un rempart contre la dissolution (mentale et physique) du sujet" (54). When the didascalie repeats the name of Cenci, it enhances his presence and, in this scene, prevents the dissolution of his subject and thus the failure of the assassination. This results in his expression:

> Cenci, *faisant face aux voix*, *crie dans la tempête* – EH BIEN, QUOI! (626)

Cenci the despot, who is a figure for authoritarian control that is at once political, sexual, theatrical, directorial, and textual, speaks back at the poetics of the *didascalie* that call his name into presence to stage an assault on his authority. He challenges the mute

speech of the direction to display his enduring power. At the end of this scene, the assassination, planned to happen during their trek to the castle, fails, because Orsino controlled the direction as indicated in the opening didascalie: "*Orsino poste ses assassins*." Sound effect signals the attempt "on entend deux coups énormes de pistolet" (626). However, the two plotters voice the failure as they shout "Raté!" This failure is deliberate by Artaud to enhance the menace and extend Cenci's power passed the third act. However, in the fourth Act, Béatrice, the true tragic hero, and not Giacomo or Orsino, takes control of the mute assassins: the figures for the mute speech power of the didascalic poetics. Her command is the one that becomes an activist force against despotism. Her role reinforces the *posture unitaire* of the theatrical form, as she becomes an equal but opposite force of cruelty to oppose the Count.

Act 4 Scene 1, The activism of the mute assassins

As mentioned earlier, the mirror effect of inversion embedded in the structure of the work guarantees that the crime of incest continues, but as a reversed crime, that of parricide. In other words, if the father rapes the daughter, then she must in turn rape the father. Béatrice is without phallus, without voiced expression beyond dream narrative or gestural escape, and thus without power. However, she can gain a force of activism through wealth, weaponry, and the didascalie. In the first scene of the fourth act, Béatrice commands the mute assassins to become her weapon, her activism, and her phallus with which she can violate her father. Artaud juxtaposes her short utterances with extensive

stage directions to narrate the parricide (628). This creates a tension in the text between the disproportionate modes, while also establishing the stage directions as not only a space for poetic expression, but also one for narrative. The key figures in this scene, who are found in the middle of the conflict between Béatrice and the Count, are the mute assassins.

We can read the mute assassins as a staged representation of Artaud's vision for the poetics of cruelty that are an expressive mode of gesture and action to dissolve despotic structures. The violence and cruelty can be read, not only on a level of content to narrate the parricide, but to also offer information concerning Artaud's theoretical theater. Cenci represents the traditional cruelty of despotic structures that are at once poetical and political. On the other hand, Béatrice is a figure of Artaudian cruelty that is an action speech to subvert oppressed expression. The mute assassins are the intermediary didascalic mode through which the "action speech" takes on material form and didactic imperative. They are the embodiment of the play's unspoken structures. In short, they incarnate a mimetic manifestation of *Cenci*'s extra-diegetic material. Béatrice commands them to kill the Count as she shouts "Là! . . . Ah! Les armes! . . . Allez!" (628). We can read the Count as a figure for the despotism of tradition that has imposed its authoritarian control to restrict expression to the dominance of textual and lyric conventions. Yet the victim has power to express command and enact revenge in the final act of Artaud's tragedy with the poetic and narrative power of stage direction, accessible through the mute assassin.

The stage directions rely heavily on gesture and in this way, Artaud's hieroglyphic, bodily language of dynamic blocking is at full violence of movement and tension. Béatrice guides the assassins, who at first signal "*l'un des deux assassins fait signe que le coeur a manqué. L'autre qu'il a essayé d'agir quand même, mais qu'il a été entrainé*" (629). Artaud makes manifest what remains implicit throughout the rest of the play: namely, for those who are silenced by muteness or trauma, the didascalie is their expressive mode. However, Béatrice, put past all limits and assaulted on all sides, now has the power to speak through the dialogic. Her expression is not the desperate crying, panic, or self-loathing of previous scenes. It is one of empowered command. She responds "Allez, montez, creusez-lui la tête, ou je le tue avec ce que je trouve et je vous accuse de sa mort" (629). Here, the syntax is flipped, and Béatrice is now subject of her expression with the Count as object in the syntax of the dialogic command.[58] The power of the activist hero is now confirmed in the action speech of the modes. Her verb - "creuser" - references the rape, or the action of violently putting a part inside another, to create the void inherent in trauma. The narrative reaches a climax as the directions read, in a heroic alexandrine "*Les assassins ressortent cette fois pleins de sang*" (629) The mute assassins are materially covered with the figurative blood of despotic tradition that echoes the spurt of blood from the god in "Jet de sang." The parricide, like the incestuous rape, is never spoken or explicitly described, and occurs off stage. It is only signaled by material condition--the blood on the assassins--and thus reinforces the didascalie as a material mode for a poetics of disruption. Béatrice gives the assassins "*une bourse et une*

[58] This contrasts the syntax of her expression after the rape : "Mon père m'a polluée" in which she clearly expresses herself in the form of object.

sorte de chasuble d'église rutilante d'or" (629). Her power exists in the money, gold, and religious relic with which she was able to hire the assassins. But her power is also established in her language and her ability to command the scene via the union of the didascalic and dialogic modes. The unspeakable act has now become the spoken command and thus the activism is achieved to merge the two modes and create the familiar *posture unitaire* meant to dissolve boundaries and suggest an awakening of new forms.

According to the historical account, Cenci was murdered by being stabbed in the eye. This penetration through the eye, another example of rape like the verb "creuser," is referenced in the final stage direction of this scene: "*On voit dans le haut du décor, Cenci réapparaitre chancelant, le poing fermé sur son œil droit comme s'il accrochait à quelque chose*" (629). The *posture unitaire* is confirmed with the pronoun "On" to unite the performers and the public. The ghost of Cenci, the power structure, remains present, but destabilized by the adjective "chancelant." The signal to the eye references his death, but can be interpreted further. The stabbing of the eye is a reference to the traumatized reader whose vision is violated by the force of cruelty. They have become the traumatized witness to this mirrored crime of Cenci's committing rape and Béatrice commanding murder. Through the mute assassins, Artaud collapses the imperative mode of the didascalie with the play's dialogue to create another *posture unitaire* that is essential to his aesthetic theory. Béatrice's speech no longer conveys emotion or information. Instead, it becomes a verbal didascalie to command the mutes whose movements are a form of kinetic speech, relevant to Artaud's directorial language and action speech. In the fourth

act, Artaud combines the poetics of stage direction and the theoretical drives of the manifestos into a deliberate *mise en abyme* of *mise en scène*. Surely Artaud viewed his text as assisting an intended performance of the sounds, gestures, and images that define his poetics of cruelty. However, looking at the text, we gain an understanding of his poetics that are an expression of sociopolitical protest via the innovation of dramatic modes and the challenge to traditional ways of representation. Artaud's system, when understood via an analysis of his drama, recalls Rancière's mute speech that expresses a democratic disruption of fixed hierarchies of representation. The intended *mise-en-scène* expression of his theater of cruelty exists in the tragedy, yet his work suggests that it could also be any physical manifestation of action. That is the true message buried in the mute spaces of the drama. Lyric and discourse can only do so much, and are the means of control for authority. Action "tout ce qui agit" manifests in the movement of bodies against despotic structures.

However, there is a further cruelty and injustice. In the final scene, Béatrice's martyrdom, and tragic heroism, are complete. The injustice, or the tragedy, is staged as her torture and execution. The stage directions describe her situation: "*Au plafond du théâtre une roue tourne comme sur un axe . . . Béatrice, suspendue par les cheveux et poussée par un garde . . . La prison dégage le bruit d'une usine en plein mouvement*" (633). Her hair, that was touched by Cenci in the first Act to suggest the incest, still keeps her restrained to the power structure, in this case the judgment of the papal authority which has deemed her guilty of parricide. The sound effect gives the impression of a factory ("le bruit d'une usine") that refers to her punishment, and the role of Papacy, as

part of a system that continually manufactures injustice. In this final scene, her performed speech is now the important textual mode of expression, as the activist poetics of the didascalie become part of her martyrdom, and thus return to silence. Béatrice states: "J'accepte le crime, mais je nie la culpabilité. . . . La cruauté du Pape rejoint celle du vieux Cenci" (635). Even though her fate is sealed, she can still express her subjectivity to align cruelty and injustice with the Pope and Cenci, and give an example of liberated expression through her acceptance and denial.

Her use of the term *cruauté* shows that authoritarian control, and even Béatrice's violent revenge, are the exteriorization of cruelty that Artaud seeks via theater. In his sense of unity, the two forms of cruelty are explicitly staged: the static, oppressive cruelty of despotism and the action force of his poetical cruelty. In this tension surrounding the formal and thematic aspects of cruelty, we understand the function of his theater. With her character, eternally tortured and raped with every reading, Artaud brings the injustice of her life into material presence in the text: "je meurs et je n'ai pas choisi" (637). Her agency of choice is negated and her martyrdom is complete, and renewed or awakened with each reading. Béatrice becomes the paramount figure for Artaud's vision of a new theater that does not "s'attarder artistiquement sur des formes" but one that is tortured like the "suppliciés que l'on brule et qui font des signes sur leurs bûchers" (509). The tortured and oppressed are plural but one in the *posture unitaire* of injustice. Béatrice's trauma, sacrifice, and punishment are reflected onto the reader. The final didascalie transmits the message and meaning of the play: "*Tout le cortège disparait sous le rythme de la musique pendant que le rideau tombe très lentement*" (638). The crowd, the performers, the text,

the stage all disappear and dissolve during the rhythm of the music. The didascalie commands one final loss of subjectivity of the individual to render them as part of the theatrical unity, the *posture unitaire* sought by Artaud. Béatrice gives her final line: "j'ai peur que la mort ne m'apprenne que j'ai fini par lui ressembler" (638). Kimberly Jannarone interprets this line as evidence of the spectator's ultimate powerlessness under the complete authority of the director who offers nothing to the spectator except submission. However, I read it as suggestive of Béatrice as the figure for a poetic activism against despotic control. In this way, activism and despotism are incestuously part of Artaud's view of an action theater. Artaud shows us that activism needs despotism. Authoritarian control and forces of destruction, like Cenci, the storm, and the plague, are all necessary monsters of menace to reinvigorate poetics and culture. In terms of theater and art, we gain an understanding that the aesthetics of protest must contain a staging of the power structure it seeks to undermine. Jannarone and Puchner are both eager to point out the contradictions inherent in his work, and these become clear while reading *Les Cenci* and the Theater of Cruelty together. There is no communal rebirth. There is no gnostic transcendence. Béatrice dies as she lived, an object restrained, except for one moment of command, power, and activism. Despotism takes control and activism fights it, in an eternal cycle of death and renewal; trauma and awakening. Despotism is millennia of control, while activism is one moment of individual revolt. It is in that one moment of activism where we find Artaud's hope for awakening, when Béatrice's liberated expression commands action manifested in the gestures of the mute assassins: Artaud's poetics of cruelty.

Incest and Cruelty

Based on the analysis of the stage directions in *Les Cenci,* I demonstrate that Artaud employs the material conditions of didascalie to give presence to despotic structures that are poetical and political. By turning them into figures in his tragedy, he then associates these structures with his characters, and thus the story they perform: the crimes of incest and parricide. In this section, I develop an understanding of why, or more exactly, what is the purpose for his theater that seeks to give presence to poetic device in the context of the incest narrative. To create the menace of authoritarian structures, Artaud turned to the trope of incest that Levi-Strauss calls "the separation between nature and culture" and the prohibition of which he determines to be "culture itself" (12). By choosing the Cenci story, Artaud hopes to dissolve the separation that, in terms of Levi-Strauss's definition, exists between nature and culture to then awaken new possibilities for theater and expression. To develop this further, I propose to evaluate Artaud's staging of incest through a theoretical framework based on the crime of incest in Sade's work.

Firstly, it is necessary to construct a concrete association between the two authors. We need look no further than his first manifesto on the theater of cruelty in which he lists one of several possible representations for his theater as "Un conte du Marquis de Sade, où l'érotisme sera transposé, figuré allégoriquement et habillé, dans le sens d'une extériorisation violente de la cruauté" (565). Even though Artaud chose *Les Cenci* instead of a Sadean *conte* to represent his theater of cruelty, I have shown that Artaud applies the

same idea of using the incest narrative to exteriorize, or one could say stage, an activist poetics of cruelty. In *Shelley's Cenci*, Stuart Curran writes "Cenci is another de Sade, yet one driven not by lust of the flesh, but by the paranoid need to destroy, to negate. In his compulsions, Artaud saw the symbolic lineaments of his own world" (244). Sade, Artaud, and Cenci want to use their creations, whether prose *conte*, *mise en scène,* or flesh and blood daughter, for the purpose of expressing a powerful and destructive truth to shake the very foundation of culture. In the article "From Cruelty to Theater: Antonin Artaud and the Marquis de Sade," Franco Tonelli states that Artaud finds in Sade's work the cruelty he seeks for his theater based on an erotic of "absolute purity" that exists "in its original state without any moral, psychological or sociological contingency dissipating its primal originality" (79) Moreover, Tonelli details how Sade is a precursor of the Theater of Cruelty because "he wants his work, as an artistic creation, to provoke a violent reaction, a new shiver" (84). With the poetics of cruelty, Artaud can produce the menacing feeling associated with the crime of incest to influence Tonelli's "new shiver." This feeling is central to the tensions between the didascalic and dialogic modes, and thus his theoretical theater is transmitted to the reader via his poetical staging in the tragedy.

This intertextuality can be used to gain an understanding of just what the crime of incest means in Artaud's aesthetic system. In Sade's universe, a need to destroy leads to the pleasure of incest and incest leads to the pleasure of destruction. Artaud sought to stage Sade's *écriture* as a possible weapon for the trauma inherent in the incest narrative, the destructive control of power, and the release of cultural awakening. The power of the libertine characters, which voice a desire for incest, defines the narrative throughout

Sade's *contes*. Incestuous desire manifests in the central role, similar to the Count Cenci, of "père destructeur:" the father-destroyer. In Sade's *Aline et Valcour* (1795), le Président de Blamont calls incest "le plaisir des dieux" as well as stating "il faut vaincre, il faut subjuguer, anéantir" (Sade, *vol. 1*, 1009). Throughout the epistolary novel, the Président continually works toward the destruction of his family for the ultimate purpose of sexually possessing his daughter Aline. Overall, the most telling example on which I claim Artaud bases his theoretical function of incest is found in *Eugénie de Franval*. This *nouvelle tragique* is included in Sade's collection *Les Crimes de l'amour* (1800). Artaud sought to stage this tale, using Pierre Klossowski's theatrical adaptation *Le Chateau de Valmore*, for the theater of cruelty before economic constraints forced him to choose *Les Cenci* instead (Artaud, *Les Cenci*, 27). In the story, M. de Franval is asked if he indeed lusts for his daughter. He states:

> Oui comme Loth! J'ai toujours été pénétré d'un si grand respect pour les livres saints, toujours si convaincu qu'on gagnait le ciel en imitant ses héros!… Une jolie personne ne saurait me tenter, parce que j'aurais le tort de l'avoir mise au monde; ce qui doit m'unir plus intimement à elle deviendrait la raison qui m'en éloignerait? . . . Ah! quelle absurdité! Laissons aux sots ces ridicules freins . . . l'empire de la beauté, les saints droits de l'amour, ne connaissent point les futiles conventions humaines; leur ascendant les anéantit . . . Foulons aux pieds ces préjugés atroces, toujours ennemis du bonheur; s'ils séduisirent quelquefois la raison, ce ne fut jamais qu'aux dépens des plus flatteuses jouissances. (Sade, *Crimes de l'amour*, 186)

In this passage, Sade outlines his theory of incest, through which we can read Artaud's staging of the incest narrative to understand the purpose of *Les Cenci* as exactly the annihilation ("anéantit") of conventions ("conventions humaines"). This passage may well have struck Artaud as we see a series of echoes in his work. First, he includes an adaptation of *Eugénie de Franval* as a possibility for his Theater of Cruelty. Secondly, the reference to Lot's daughters at the beginning of the passage recalls his essay, "La

Mise en scène et la métaphyisque" – written in 1931, published in the NRF in 1932, and included in the 1938 publication of *Le Théâtre et son double*. Artaud offers an in-depth description of the sixteenth-century Flemish painting "Les Filles de Loth" by Lucas van den Leyden that he saw in the Louvre. Artaud describes the painting as "le caractère profondément incestueux du vieux thème que le peintre développe ici en images passionnées" (*Œuvres*, 522). Artaud relates this painting to his vision of a new theater as such: "je dis en tout cas que cette peinture est ce que le théâtre devrait être, s'il savait parler le langage qui lui appartient" (524). This is all connected to his purpose for a new expression of action poetics and a theater that is the "découverte d'un langage actif, actif et anarchique, où les délimitations habituelles des sentiments et des mots soient abandonnées" (527). For Artaud, the activism is found in a concept of a new language and an awakening of theatrical and poetic form through the *cruauté* of anarchic action that defines his poetics of cruelty.

For Kimberly Jannarone, the link between Sade and Artaud does not highlight an activist message, but rather the authoritarian power forced on the characters, the performers, and the audience/reader. She states that in Artaud's theater "a sadistic quality pervades […] It is easy to pursue the idea of sadism in the manifesto: the sadist performs superiority on weaker beings in order to see his power" (153). She ties this idea of a demonstration of power to the purpose of his theater: "[t]he director/audience relationship of Artaud's ideal theater proposes just this: not a cure, but an enactment of power" (153). I agree with Jannarone that static power structures, like Cenci, the Pope, and traditional lyric verse, hold an extremely important place in Artaud's theater, and specifically his

didascalic poetics that work to enhance the material power and menace of these structures. However, I do not read his work as an exercise of power for only sadistic pleasure. Through bringing sadism into presence, and Cenci's torturing of his daughter and family is surely sadistic, he can stage the dynamic between superior subject and restrained object. In doing so, he shows how new forms of textual expression, changes to traditional hierarchies of representation, and poetics of gesture and action can work to subvert power.

This comparative approach offers an understanding of Artaud's contradictory method. In staging sadism, he does not perform the sadistic act of forcing sexual violence on the reader for despotic pleasure, but rather for critique of this very act. Artaud stages the sadistic control inherent in power structures for the purpose of critique, and his reinvigoration of a traditional form--the didascalie--signals an activism of protest. This reading modifies Jannarone's conception of Artaud's work as an exercise of fascist power. For Artaud, the fascist is the dialogic mode that he claims dominates theater. Through forcing poetic devices of lyric poetry inside the silent stage direction, Artaud changes how one approaches dramatic modes. Furthermore, he allows the mute speech powers of the mode to make menace, disrupt and undermine the textual authority of traditional lyric expression. Yet he does not strip it of its poetic potential. Instead he uses poetic device to enhance gesture and the action speech of mute assassins who kill the Count. Evaluating his work, as Jannarone does, in a historical and social context, it is plausible to read Artaud's scenario from 1935 as a *mise en scène* of fascism with the director as dictator. However, reading *Les Cenci* in its enduring form as text offers an understanding of how

to subvert despotic authority and activate poetic potential. Yet, in the end, abusive power and injustice are likely to endure, while activism suffers a martyr's fate. However, the activist ('tout ce qui agit') is continually renewed with each reading and each action.

Conclusion

Artaud's Theater of Cruelty and his only dramatic representation of it in *Les Cenci* are not only about theater, but rather an experiment with how the manipulation of theatrical form can influence an activist poetics. Perhaps on the stage in 1935, *Les Cenci* was an attempt at a theatrical cruelty. However, through reading the text, we gain a better understanding of Artaud's system as a didascalic poetics of action speech that I term Poetics of Cruelty. Artaudian scholarship often becomes too focused on the *Cenci's* theatrical failure in 1935, and his subsequent madness, and thus fails to see the success of his work that is the development of the poetic space of stage direction as a new mode of expression. This poetic space works with his manifestos to give life and material presence to his action speech. Artaud may have failed to awaken a specific audience, or culture, or a communal sense of cosmic transcendence, but he did awaken poetic and dramatic space to new possibilities.

Even though Derrida has argued that "Artaud's projects, by their nature, by *his* nature, cannot succeed: they betray him the moment they begin to be articulated" (Jannarone, 287) and Peter Brook declares "Artaud applied is Artaud betrayed" (54) there is an application found in Artaud's work: the poetics of mute speech expressed by the

mute assassins. These figures show how changes to and tensions between textual modes can express protest to undermine discourse and disrupt discourses of power. However, I am left with the question of why did Artaud not include *Les Cenci* in the *Theater and its Double* published in 1938 after his vision quest in Mexico. Perhaps the trauma of the production's failure left *Les Cenci* an unspeakable act, not to be published in the *Theater and Its Double*. Perhaps Artaud feared the destructive nature of the play, and wanted to keep it away from his epic theoretical work. Much criticism dismisses the *Cenci* text, and uses it to determine his theater as a failure. However, I view his work as a success in terms of the poetic potential of stage direction and its mute speech power to disrupt. According to accounts, Artaud's own authoritarian control destroyed the *Cenci* production. However, his aesthetic activism, like Béatrice's eternal hell, endures within his text that should be included on all syllabi in Trump America.

Chapter 3: The Poetics of Difference in Genet's *Le Balcon*

"However fair or pure you crave the wand, you see through me what lies beyond."

- Papa Emeritus II

Introduction

In 1954, Jean Genet wrote a letter to his editor and publisher Jean-Jacques Pauvert, which he included as a preface to Pauvert's edition of Genet's drama *Les Bonnes*. The same year, Éditions J-J Pauvert also published selected works of the Marquis de Sade, an action for which Pauvert was arrested, tried, and convicted because the published works were judged to be detrimental to French society.[59] The Pauvert letter, like many of Genet's theoretical writings on theater, offers a lens through which to read Genet's dramas, especially his late political theater, an acclaimed part of his career he began at the same time as Pauvert's court case. In the letter, Genet details his mood ("humeur") concerning "le théâtre en général que je voudrais dire quelques mots" (*Théâtre Complet*, 815). He speaks of theater as an aesthetic system to influence society through new concepts of dramatic language: "un art qui serait un enchevêtrement profond de symboles actifs, capables de parler au public un langage où rien ne serait dit mais tout pressenti" (815). Genet envisions a theater of active communication with a contemporary public via a system that challenges the audience to not just listen and be told what things

[59] For the full story consult the court proceedings annotated and published by J-J Pauvert entitled *L'Affaire Sade.*

are, but rather to use one's intuition to forsee ("pressentir") and experience things outside of their appearance. This system defines his late political theater that includes the dramas *Le Balcon, Les Nègres,* and *Les Paravents*.

Genet continues a description of his idealized theater in a letter to director Roger Blin when he states that "je voudrais aussi que ce Jeu [le Théâtre] l'émeuve au point qu'il se demande si derrière ce Jeu, se cache une réalité" (622). To accomplish this task of engaging or moving[60] his reader, Genet employs difference between appearance and reality in order to challenge his interlocutor to question authority figures and the discourses they speak. His theater becomes a staged poetics of difference, or *décalage*,[61]

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[60] Genet's use of the term *émouvoir* to describe the action he wants for his theater, and its dynamic vis-à-vis the reader / audience, recalls a literary tradition. In "Aux lecteurs" the preface to his epic poem *Les Tragiques,* Protestant poet Agrippa d'Aubigné writes "nous sommes ennuyéz de livres / qui enseignent, donnez-nous en pour esmouvoir" (12 - 13). When reading the verb *émouvoir* etymologically, in these contexts, both poets offer their text as a means to move a people, not just emotionally, but also socially as implicated in the corresponding substantive *l'émeute,* meaning social movement through an explosion of violence. For d'Aubigné, this violence is historical and material as it relates to the Wars of Religion. In Genet's drama, this violent explosion is linked to representations of *le mal* "que le mal sur la scène explose" (261) to challenge his reader to uncover truths behind the illusions of power. Furthermore, this connection between Genet and d'Aubigné recalls the 1857 first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* in which Charles Baudelaire attaches a verse from d'Aubigné as an epigraph: "Et que par les escrits le mal ressuscité infectera les mœurs de la postérité." This creates a correspondence between the works to reinforce the function of poetic language that is meant to move, challenge, or infect. The force for this movement is provoked from representations of *le mal* which become for Genet "un acte à partir duquel le public réagit" (261).

[61] I translate *décalage* to mean difference, while also implying displacement and instability as related to the etymology of the term. When using the term 'difference' one has to acknowledge Derrida's work *Writing and Difference*. To sum up Derrida's concept of difference I turn to Alan Bass's translation and introduction. He succinctly describes Derrida's *différance* as "it does not function simply either as *différence* (difference) or as *différance* in the usual sense (deferral), and plays on both meanings at once. Throughout Writing and Difference Derrida links the concept of *différance* to his play on the words *totalitarianism* and *solicitation*. [...] Derrida submits the violent, totalitarian structural project to the counter violence of solicitation, from the Latin sollicitare, meaning to shake the totality. Every totality, he shows, can be totally shaken, that is, it can be shown to be founded on that which it excludes, that which would be in excess for a reductive analysis of any kind" (xvi). This dialectic of totalitarianism and solicitation works well to understand Genet's poetic of *décalage* that seeks to shake the authoritarian power of discourse as voiced by his figures of judge, bishop, general, revolutionary, etc. Through comparing the falseness of their dialogic discourse with that which it excludes, i.e. a material realness based in didascalic language, Genet's drama works to destabilize meaning, and thus authority, through excess and difference.

that he describes in the Pauvert letter as "signes aussi éloignés que possible de ce qu'ils doivent d'abord signifier" (816). The term *décalage* is revelatory when speaking of Genet's work, as, in its etymology, it means to remove a wedge or support in order to render something unstable. Genet's system of *décalage* is based on the exhibition of language to show that the words do not mean what they appear to signify, but nonetheless, are loaded with a different meaning derived from his theater.

In this chapter, I propose an association between Genet's drama *Le Balcon* and Pauvert's court case involving Sade, grounded in historical context, to explore Genet's staging in his dramatic text of the judicial Court and banned literature. I develop how Genet stages Sade's text as a means to simulate, parody, and undermine the social influence of controversial literature. This method renders comical and powerless not only the banned text but also, and more importantly, the authority that controls the distribution of organized language and enforces the punishment when this language is deemed contrary to its moral order. I argue that his drama *Le Balcon* employs a poetics of stage direction to create difference in order to *décaler,* or destabilize, discourses of power through exhibiting banned text. Genet states in the Pauvert letter "je tâchai d'obtenir un décalage qui, permettant un ton déclamatoire, porterait le théâtre sur le théâtre" (816). Through reading his theater, and the dynamics between modes, as a system of *décalage*, I evaluate Genet's drama as an aesthetic activism of exhibition for protest. By exposing the banned text, Genet critiques not only the specific court case against Pauvert, but censorship as a whole. My analysis focuses on his textual drama to show how Genet juxtaposes material stage directions with the performance of inauthentic simulation to

create tension between the didascalic and dialogic modes of theater. In doing so he creates the *décalage* between material reality and simulation to construct his poetics of difference. This use of language intends to provoke a politics by challenging the reader to question discourses of authority. My methodology concentrates on close readings of Genet's stage directions that employ theatrical properties of appearance, sound, and gesture. Through examining how his didascalie work in the drama, I show that Genet's theater is a system whose purpose is to strip down and expose as he states "son point de départ, sa raison d'être, c'est l'exhibitionisme" (815). Through his poetics, Genet exhibits that text, and its ritualized spectacle of performance, determines social power and hierarchy. By disrupting the relation between text and meaning, Genet offers a system of subversion to discourses of power, inherent in the law code and the judicial court, that impose criminality.

I examine scholarship on Genet's theatrical form and the interconnected aesthetics of politics in order to situate *Le Balcon* as an expression of sociopolitical concerns. Secondly, I focus on close readings of the text to demonstrate how his poetics of difference manifest in the dynamic between didascalie and dialogue in *Le Balcon*. The stage directions work with the performance to undermine figures of authority, but more importantly, the words they speak. My analysis shows how Genet employs difference to juxtapose the real material world inherent in stage direction with the language of simulated performance. With this gap he can undermine performed language to expose its role in discourses of power and render authority as illusion. In the third section, I narrow the scope of his activist system to connect it to the Pauvert court case through an

intertextual reading of the second tableau. This scene presents a parody of the judicial system that I read as also a parody of scenes from *Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu*. A thorough examination of this intertextuality shows how and why Genet's drama stages Sade's prose in the context of a patron in a brothel who simulates a judge. Furthermore, I read the character of Madame Irma, like Thérèse and Béatrice de Cenci, as a textual figure for the activist poetics. Genet details how Madame Irma performs the role of *metteur en scène,* or perhaps *metteur en texte*, as she manages the scenarios, furnishes the props, and controls the movements in the brothel, on the stage, and in the dramatic text. She states "je n'en suis que la directrice, et chacun, quand il sonne, entre, y apporte son scénario parfaitement réglé. Il me reste à louer la salle et à fournir les accessoires, les acteurs et les actrices" (293). Irma is both manager of the extra-diegetic text and the diegetic brothel that often blur, and in this way, Genet establishes a *mise-en-abyme* of *mise-en-scène* via the figure of the Madame. Similar to the other authors in this study, this theatrical method allows an understanding of a theory of theater through characters as figures for textual dynamics.

Since Madame Irma manages all scenarios, and texts, I read her actions as a form of prostitution. To make his aesthetic activism function, Genet prostitutes Sade's work as a means to protest the court case, which itself is a simulation of text: the written legal Code. Genet stages both the code and the condemned work in order to establish his difference and undermine their social influence through parody. From this study, scholarship gains an understanding of Genet's drama as a form of activism that exposes text as merely a stylized distribution of *jouissance*, like the commodity of the prostitute.

Genet's staging of banned text helps to expand the activist function of his complex drama. His expression of protest in *Le Balcon,* extends beyond Pauvert and Sade, to critique reactionary authority, while also satirizing progressive revolution. Genet's work speaks to our current society, and specifically, the tensions between progressive liberalism and reactionary nationalism in Europe and America.

Defining difference in Genet's Political Theater

Twenty-first century scholarship on Genet's drama focuses primarily on two approaches: his manipulation of narrative/theatrical form and the political focus of his work. Anglo-American scholarship tends to lean towards methodologies invested in sociopolitical readings of identity in his work, including those experienced by black, queer, immigrant individuals and marginalized communities.[62] French scholarship focuses on his *écriture* including his theatrical form, his movement from prose to theater, his system of *réécriture,* his aesthetics, as well as his discourse of marginality. [63] Generally speaking, one could say the Anglo-American reading is primarily concerned with content and theme, whereas the French reading is one concerned with form. Anglo-American scholarship is also invested in his influence on the development of avant-garde

[62] See the collection of essays contained in *Jean Genet: Politics and Performance*.
[63] See the following studies Eric Marty, "La question de la transaction théâtrale,." Benoit Barut "La didascalie et ses débords dans le théâtre de Jean Genet." Myriam Bendhiff-Syllas. "Jean Genet: Juge et partie: du narrateur omnipotent au dramaturge commentateur" Audrey Lemesle, "Le Balcon: réécritures et achèvements.". Marie-Claude Hubert. *L'Esthétique de Jean Genet*. Frieda Ekotto. "Violence, précarité, et misère dans le texte de Genet."

theater in London and New York, and his theoretical approaches to scene and staging. Through reading Genet's theater as aesthetic activism, the current study seeks to harmonize the two approaches to show how his didascalic poetical form works to express the identity issues of marginal groups in order to provoke a politics. In the current study, the marginalized group is the banned text.

Before examining his stage directions, it is first necessary to define a key structure of his system: the difference created through *décalage*. This poetics of difference is necessary to produce the dynamics of tension at levels including form versus content, individual against collective, marginalized versus authoritative, illusion against material reality, dialogic and didascalic forms, reactionary and progressive power, function and appearance, etc. These opposing characters, themes, and forms work together in the text to establish his system of *décalage* that produces the force of his activist poetics to destabilize power discourse and express sociopolitical concerns. Even though there is political expression in his work, it becomes apparent that Genet's drama offers an example of aesthetic rather than political activism. In other words, he seeks to question the role of power in society through manipulating literary and artistic forms, rather than using his theater to support a specific political movement or ideology. This reinforces why political motives and inclinations are murky and purposefully hidden or abstracted in his work. As Carl Lavery confirms "one of the great unresolved mysteries of Genet's career is his steadfast refusal to admit that his plays are politically motivated, even though they deal with some of the most inflammatory political material staged in modern theater" (79). Genet cannot be placed as a member of any defined aesthetico-political

movement, and therefore, readings of his work are not restricted by ideology or theory. Genet left his theater purposefully ambiguous to challenge his readers. In her article "The Theater of Genet in Sociological Perspective" Maria Shevtsova states that the political "does not appear to motivate his writing. Brecht would be the apposite contrast to make this point clear" (46). Instead, she argues that Genet's theater takes a diagonal approach to politics that involve, to quote the playwright himself, "Not politics as such, as it's practiced by politicians, but to address social situations that would provoke a politics" (46).[64] As stated in the Pauvert letter, Genet wants to provoke the reader to question truths and meanings through engaging with his "jeu" of a theatrical game, and not to force an ideology on them, or command them to act according to a certain model as politicians do.

His use of difference does indeed express political concerns, while also engaging with systems of representation in literary forms and language. Shevtsova describes how Genet "grasps the world from an angle through a diagonal perspective" that "seeks to compress space and time" to "suggest simultaneity of action" (45). This simultaneity of action and space is central to his system of difference because it establishes a plurality that is purposeful for the displacement and contrast inherent in his method. Furthermore, his construct of plurality is not just concerned with space or action, but also with meaning. As we engage the text in the next section, we see how in *Le Balcon*, the reader uncovers simultaneous definitions occurring in the words of the drama, specifically terms of authority such as *évêque*, *juge*, *général* and *reine*. Shevtsova continues to say that this

[64] The quote is taken from a 1983 interview in which Genet describes the indirect way he approaches politics in *Les Bonnes*.

simultaneity of action leads to a reflexive structure of *mise en abyme* that is "certainly inward looking" (45). His form looks inward at the language of performance and power to exhibit its inauthenticity as simulation. Shevtsova focuses this argument to a reading of *Les Nègres*, to show that the drama suggests that the only exit from inauthenticity is "action performed in the wings" (48) and thus off stage, outside of the performance. The same argument applies to *Le Balcon*; maybe not off the stage in the wings, but outside of the story or the diegesis, and thus into the didascalic mute speech. The material conditions and imperatives of the didascalic mode render it as authentic and real. Furthermore, its language systems become an expression of reality that contrasts the falseness of performance. Her argument supports a study of the stage directions in Genet's system that exist outside, around, or diagonal to the language of performance. Genet juxtaposes the realness of the stage directions to contrast and undermine the performed discourses of the authority figures.

To further an understanding of how staging difference can express socio-political concerns, in her article "A micro-treatise on a mini-politics," Clare Finburgh elucidates Genet's aesthetics of politics to claim that "Genet's entire oeuvre constitutes a revolt against conformity" (79). She outlines how his novels and early theater demonstrate private revolt by individualist characters, that then transitions in his late theater to a social and political ethics of collective revolt. The force of his protest is found in the "tension between solitude, individuality and his later engagement with commonly shared causes" (89). She concludes that "the tension between non-belonging and belonging, between alone and with defines Genet's politics" (89). This tension between opposites, that she

claims is central to Genet's theater, further supports the reading of his use of dramatic language to stage and exhibit difference as a fundamental structure in his drama. Like Shevtsova, Finburgh highlights the function of difference in *Les Nègres* as "the dynamic in the play between cooperation and conflict encapsulates Genet's negotiation of collectivity with individualism as he juxtaposes sparring with speaking, diatribe with dialogue" (85). The difference, inherent in opposition, is Genet's means of creating a force of provocation and tensions between forms and modes of expression. This is not only evident in the staging and actions of his characters, but also his theatrical form that pits the realness of didascalie against the spoken falseness inherent in performances of power fantasies. For example, in *Les Nègres*, specifically black actors perform as Black Africans wearing white masks to act as their colonial oppressors, and as such, their real blackness contrasts the simulation of white skin as a mask to undermine its power. This same approach is evident in *Le Balcon*, as Genet uses the constant of material world objects in his scenes--bed, mirror, light, reflection, image, sound, and gesture--to juxtapose a material sense of realness against the performed language of simulated authority. In this way, he undermines the performed discourse of authority that establishes their social power through defining their functions as bishop, general, judge, etc.

In *The Politics of Genet's Late Theater,* Carl Lavery explores the aesthetics of Genet's politics to argue that his theater seeks to wound the audience. According to Lavery, Genet's theater is "an 'active explosion,' which overwhelms the spectator with evil . . . everything that disturbs the contours of self and the subject's sense of propriety.

In Genet's hands, theater is negative and negating, a disorienting sensorium where the wound of being is made palpable and the world uncanny and strange" (95). This sense of the uncanny works to produce a feeling of homelessness and displacement to disturb propriety, create a social wound, and disrupt the ideal of Frenchness because "in the 1950's the home became synonymous with self, a narcissistic haven where the subject strove to protect herself from the uncanniness of the outside world" (110). Even though Lavery indicates that Genet's theater is not overtly political, he does indeed produce a "new type of politically efficacious theater" through the "cultivation of negativity and absence." (134). In terms of the absence produced through Genet's theater, Lavery concludes: "absence is synonymous here with the wound – that painful experience of nothingness which, by disturbing the subject's sense of self, allows for the possibility of equality to emerge" (134). One could also read the absence that defines the wound as the gap inherent in difference.

Furthermore, Lavery reads the wound as "contesting the privatization of social space provoked by the modernization of France" to produce "a differential space" a "heterotopic space" in theater (134). Lavery uses this plurality of space to read Genet's drama as an exposition of reactionary fear in a postwar industrialized, capitalist France where the abundance of commodities, and the infiltration of colonization, pollute and corrupt the traditional essence of Frenchness. In terms of a formal reading, this "differential space" is another figure through which to understand Genet's use of stage direction. In his drama, the didascalie becomes a poetic space to influence the aesthetics of difference for the purpose of expressing the uncanny feeling of displacement and

confusion. Lavery offers examples of the heterotopic spatiality in Genet's theater where a plurality of spaces include the brothel, the theater, the home, and the revolutionary streets. Lavery's heterotopic space bolsters my argument that Genet's use of plurality does not only refer to physical or social spaces like the street or the home, but textual ones as well. In summation, Shevtsova's diagonal, simultaneity of action, Finburgh's tensions of revolt, and Lavery's differential space strengthen the presence and political purpose of difference in Genet's late theater. The current study connects his use of difference to the textual dynamics of his drama to elaborate his poetical system that seeks to undermine discourse.

To further the connection between stage direction and a sense of difference, in the article "La didascalie et ses débords dans le théâtre de Jean Genet," Benoît Barut systematically classifies Genet's various didascalic registers that form what he calls "un débord didascalique" (36). Barut determines this excess of directorial language by classifying all paratexts as part of Genet's didascalic language "ce sont bien les didascalies comme parole - et non la poétique scénique de Genet déjà largement commentée - qui feront ici l'objet d'une étude" (36). In this way, Barut studies the didascalic program in Genet's work as a directorial language, not just a poetic of stage direction, that is "un texte à part entière" (45) as in the *Lettres à Roger Blin*. Barut references writings like "Comment jouer le Balcon" as well as Genet's editorial notations that exist outside of the textual space of stage direction, but offer a directorial voice nonetheless. The excess that defines his *débord didascalique* works well with the plurality of space and meaning theorized above to determine Genet's complete scope of

the poetical use of language in the drama. Excess supports his poetics of difference because he fills physical and textual space with a plurality of voices, tones, registers, modes and meaning. In doing so, he seeks to create tensions and a multi angle view of political situations to provoke the reader to question the authorities whose discourse regulate the community.

Barut differentiates between stage directions that are primarily "utilitaire, commun, conventionelles," therefore traditional, with ones that are "les plus interessantes justement parce qu'elles se mêlent à autre chose" (41) that create "un texte que l'on peut parcourir de différentes manières et dans différents sens" (40). The didascalie in Genet's theater is used to create a realism that is "défié, décalé, débordé, déformé le réalisme par son contraire" (39). Genet's system of *décalage* and *débord didascalique,* what I term his poetics of difference, works to "mettre le lecteur en porte à faux" which according to Barut is the "valeur esthétique de Genet" (43). In this way, Genet juxtaposes the realness of the material world of costume, sound, body and object with a falseness based on diagonal perspectives, simultaneity of spaces, and plurality of meanings. The dramatist seeks to play with real and fake, material and simulation to undermine and destabilize discourses of power. Moreover, he also entertains via humor and parody through the action of "déconner" (47). This verb means to speak nonsense and make fun of, but also to exhibit the "con", and etymologically to "sortir du con." The intransitive quality of the verb "déconner" is helpful to understand that Genet isn't passing anything to the audience. His system is not transitive like Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* in the figurative form of rubber balls meant to transfer an ideology to a public. Genet's drama does not

transfer ideology, it exposes illusion through poetic dynamics and the erotics of a "bal" of "con" evident in the title of the work. Through these two actions of *décaler* and *déconner* we can understand his system that destabilizes authoritative language through parodying power. Barut concludes that Genet's method uses both "tradition et trahison" to create a "texte de combat" (48).

But what is the purpose of this *texte de combat*? What is he trying to fight or to expose with his text? Barut, and other scholars have focused on Genet's didascalie to categorize them, point to their originality and difference, or label them as a rhetorical structure for irony and satire through ludic, baroque, or burlesque stagings. However, is there a purpose other than reinvention of a traditional form? In the next section I analyze Genet's stage directions to understand how he creates his poetics of difference that convey the aforementioned scholarly arguments of displacement, tension, and plurality in order to provoke the politics of social commentary that renders his dramatic text as an aesthetic activism. If Genet seeks to undermine the performed language of authority figures in his work, I must first define what is real, and how Genet uses the real to critique the performance. One can find examples of the real in his varied use of theatrical properties including appearance, sound, and gesture. He employs these properties to juxtapose realness based on sense experience against the simulation of performed speech inherent in social role to create the force of difference necessary to his system. After reading his stage directions along this three tiered approach (appearance, sound, gesture), I can then process my analysis to determine not only how his system functions, but its purpose of exhibition to parody, expose, and undermine, specifically, the court's 1956

ruling against his publisher, and, in a larger sense, any form of censorship that blocks the distribution of the sensible.

Reading the Poetics of Difference, **The appearance of didascalic reality**

In the paratextual essay "Comment Jouer le Balcon" Genet states "Elle [la pièce] est – elle sera donc jouée comme – la glorification de l'Image et du reflet. Sa signification – satirique ou non – apparaîtra seulement dans ce cas" (*Théâtre*, 260). If his reader indeed takes him at his word, then this statement suggests the importance of image and reflection in his dramatic "jeu." These qualities are indicative of a visual perspective of sense relative to appearance. The visual, and specifically its form of reflection, intends to create a materially based correspondence between the scene and the reader who are meant to reflect each other. Before even reading the text, one understands the importance of the visual through Genet's use of the term "Tableau"[65] to differentiate between the sequences in the drama, as opposed to scene or act. In the first tableau, Genet presents an extensively detailed stage direction. The first sentence in the didascalie sets the constant upon which Genet can establish his system of difference: "*Au plafond, un lustre qui demeurera le même à chaque tableau*" (264).

Even though characters, scenes, and situations change during each scenario, the same light source exists to illuminate them. The object of the light fixture signifies the reader's constant vision necessary to expose the illusions that are the power fantasies.

[65] See footnote 52 for information concerning the tradition of the *tableau* as a reference to drama's effects on the reader's sensibilities.

This challenge correlates to the purpose of his theater, which he describes in the Pauvert letter, moves the reader to "se demande si derrière ce Jeu, se cache une réalité." In order for this system of difference to function, it is essential for Genet to keep one constant with which to contrast the changing authority figures, rooms, identities, etc. It is the *lustre* that provides this constancy. The *lustre* is only mentioned in the space of stage direction to offer the illumination of 'source lighting' with which to perceive aspects of the drama. This establishes the didascalie as a frame through which to perceive the story. In other words, one should consider the material conditions of the scene as a framework to read the discourse. Beyond its function as a constant, there is another level to the *lustre* that relates to a sense of realness, with which Genet can juxtapose the simulations. In the article "*Le Balcon*: La question de la transaction théâtrale," Eric Marty describes the *lustre* as a reference to Baudelaire's description of the stage light in *Mon coeur mis à nu* as "un bel objet lumineux, cristallin, compliqué, circulaire, et symétrique" that is "l'acteur principal" (108) in theater. Marty argues that the proposed reference to Baudelaire is not only for an aesthetic value, but to transcribe "la métaphysique de Genet qui, on le sait, oppose de manière radicale, à propos des Figures, l'apparence et la fonction" (109). Marty develops the reference to Baudelaire through the object of the "lustre" on the stage, but also in the brothel, as a means to highlight "l'idée baudelairienne sur la prostitution comme étant 'le réel' du monde, à laquelle tout peut être ramené" (109). Marty's claim helps to establish the light fixture as a material signifier for *le réel du monde*, and thus an object of realness with which to contrast the falseness of the performance. The light source, or perhaps the poetic vision that theater offers, can expose the falseness and

inauthenticity of authority. Overall, the *lustre* is a loaded object of material reality that suggests the material real world as a frame of 'source lighting' to assist the reader to foresee or *pressentir* the purpose of his theater of exhibition.

After the description of the *lustre*, the direction presents material objects including furniture and props such as "*paravents*," "*crucifix*," "*un miroir*," "*un lit*," "*une table*," and "*un fauteil*" (*Théâtre,* 264). Placed on top of the furniture, the reader envisions clothing of a bourgeois "*pantalon noir*," "*une chemise*," "*un veston*" and the ritual wardrobe of the bishop ("évêque") "*mitré et en chape dorée*." This contrast of clothes and costume establishes difference via an association between the inanimate secular bourgeois outfit and the dressed bishop. This difference based on mute material costume works to undermine the bishop's discourse. Even before he speaks, the extensive didascalie presents his appearance and thus shows that appearance determines essence. Genet animates the Bishop, in an Artaudian way, through the *démésure* effect of "*plus grand que nature*" accomplished by the actor "*qui montera sur des patins de tragédien d'environ 0,50m de haut*" (264). This abrupt change in perspective from the clothes on the horizontal bed to the vertical position of the bishop supports Genet's diagonal approach that creates difference to destabilize the reader's perspective. The specific description of the size of the stilts "*0,50m*" contrasts the superlative "*plus grande que nature*" to juxtapose measured material reality with hyberbole to further a sense of disorienting difference. This technique of *démésure* renders the character as uncanny, like the described *épouvantail*. The undressed bourgeois has become the bishop in a burlesque turn of parody defined via the mute speech poetics of appearance and costume. This

difference, materially conceived in the direction, works to make the reader question the authority of the bishop. In this scene, the bishop performs an extended monologue and debate with Madame Irma concerning the function of a *prélat,* or religious figure, while he undresses from the bishop's outfit into his "*vêtements civils*." The bishop describes the role of religious authority as "en vérité, ce n'est pas tant la douceur ni l'onction qui devraient définir un prélat, mais la plus rigoureuse intelligence" (264). Genet's poetics of difference work to undermine the *vérité* about which the gentleman speaks and thus devalue the function of bishop.

The first direction also contains examples of Genet's often discussed editorial commentary: "*je n'ai pas dit qu'elle se torche*" and "*Non. Je préfère décidement la robe longue de deuil, et le chapeau de crêpe, sans voile*" (264). One typically reads stage direction as the diegetic and extra-diegetic commands to character and actor. However, Genet uses this mode to offer his own preference in order to establish a dialogue with the reader. Genet adds subjectivity to the didascalie, enhancing its expressive function as the textual space of the material, real world evident in the costume ("robe longue") and the body ("elle se torche."). With this editorial commentary Genet offers multiple voices and modes of expression to highlight the fact that his theater is not just a spectacle or text for entertainment. It is a purposeful system of exhibition and communication between author and reader, which corresponds to Rancière's emancipation from hierarchies of representation to achieve an axiom of equality. Through this poetics of difference and plurality of voice, Genet seeks to disrupt the meaning of the term "Évêque," around which both the didascalic and dialogic modes focus in this scene. With his didascalic

voices, Genet offers the definition of the bishop as ritual objects like the *mitre* and the *chape dorée*. There is also the character that is undressed bourgeois and simulated bishop, played by the male actor who performs this dual character. The figure also gives presence to the tradition and social function of a bishop as a profession. Furthermore, the female sinner, performed by the prostitute, is another extension of the scope of definition for the bishop. Genet employs this plurality, built upon difference and excess, to pollute the significance of the word "évêque" to further weaken the words that are spoken by him, specifically those describing the function of the *prélat*. One way to think of Genet's poetic is that this excess in the term "évêque" is similar to the inclusion of additives that dilute the potency of a distilled liquor or precious metal. Furthermore, there is movement and displacement of the scene at the end of the Tableau: "la scène se déplace de gauche à droite, comme si elle s'enfonçait dans la coulisse." This movement attests to Genet's use of simultaneity that further enhances heterotopic space, a plurality of meaning and an aesthetics of excess all based on the visual perception, via the *lustre*, of costume, appearance, and movement.

The second tableau continues the consistency of props that are involved with illuminating (the light fixture), inverting (mirror), or disturbing (the screens) appearance "*Même lustre. Trois paravents bruns. Murs nus. Même miroir, à droite, où se réfléchit le même lit défait au premier tableau*" (270). The repetition of the term "*même*" establishes the constancy of the *lustre*, the mirror, and the "*lit défait*." These objects are loaded with meaning relative to his poetic system of exhibition. The disturbed, unmade bed obviously represents the erotic that he employs for an aesthetic force. The "*lustre*" is the source

lighting of material reality through which the reader must perceive the scene. For the mirror, Thomas Adler describes it in *Le Balcon* as a figure "to underline man's pervasive need not just to play roles but to receive as well the validation that can only come from being observed by an audience" (363). I agree with the connotation of the mirror that suggests the need to be seen and watched as part of the power fantasies in the brothel. In no circumstance are the patrons, the prostitutes or other characters ever alone in the drama. However, this reading incorporates the mirror into the simulation as expressed in the dialogic mode. The mute object of the mirror in the didascalie is imbued with a realness that extends beyond the power fantasies, since it remains the same throughout the drama in contrast to the changing scenarios. Even though the mirror creates an illusion of an inverted image, it is a natural phenomenon, like looking at the surface of the water. Through the material conditions of the didascalie, Genet seeks to render his text as a mirror, that the reader is meant to hold to reflect themselves. The mirror not only suggests the exhibitionism of a need to be seen, but also a reflexivity that seeks to establish a relation, or a communication, between the work and the reader. These theatrical properties remain consistent throughout the drama and represent his aesthetic system. In this way he offers to the reader the message that the language of the stage direction--object, costume, spatial organization, furniture, sound, body--is constant, real, and purposeful, while the language of the performance is inauthentic simulation to be questioned. Even though the patrons in the brothel change from bishop to judge, and the prostitutes change during the scenario, the aforementioned objects of the light fixture,

mirror, and bed, and thus the aesthetic system they represent, maintain their presence throughout.

In the second *tableau*, Genet employs the violent erotic to augment the impact of the image on the reader. Before even developing the scenario of this fantasy, the image in the opening direction conveys difference to the audience. The prostitute with makeup ("*fardée*") and lace ("*peignoir de dentelle*") in the first tableau changes to a brutally exposed woman in a violent posture: "*Une femme, jeune et belle*" described as "*enchainée*," "*poignets liés*," and "*sa robe de mousseline est lacérée. Les seins sont nus*" (270). The violent posture of the prostitute corresponds to that of the other character, the *bourreau*. He is described as "*un géant*," "*très musclé*," "*son fouet est passé derrière la boucle de sa ceinture, dans le dos, de sorte qu'il semble être pourvu d'une queue*" (270). As the reader learns, the *bourreau*'s function in this scenario is to strike ("cogner") the prostitute, in this case a simulated thief, as commanded by the third figure of the judge. He is described, like the bishop in the preceding tableau, as "*démésuré*" based on the stilts underneath his robe. Yet there is an interesting juxtaposition of image as he crawls "*un juge qui rampe*" (271). Genet inverts the vertical of the stilts to the horizontal to play with perspective and further establish difference. The imagined image of a crawling judge, an erotically bound female, and a ferocious animal-like male aggressor, creates an exhibition of critique before any speech is performed via the mute speech of didascalic language.

In the third tableau, Genet reinforces the constancy that is so important to contrast with the impermanence of simulation. The forms that remain the same are once again the

lustre and the mirror, the main components of the aesthetic activism: vision and audience. The important prop in this scene is "*un cheval dont se servent les danseurs folkloriques avec une petite jupe plissée*" (277). There is an association of animality via "cheval" and an erotic clothing in "jupe plissée" projected onto an inanimate object, the toy horse that becomes an extension of the prostitute who is ridden by the General in this scene. Genet creates an important link through the props between the authority figures and the prostitutes. Through the poetics of the props, in this case metonymy, there is a contiguous association between the two figures of authority and prostitute. This recalls Marty's claim concerning the prostitute in Baudelaire's work as a symbol of the real. We can understand this juxtaposition then as simulated authority against real prostitute. This relation also corresponds to the simulated, and thus fake, dialogic discourses of religious, judicial and military power against the mute-loquacious realness of the direction. Furthermore, across these scenes, Genet maintains a triad of characters that determine a certain unholy or uncanny trinity witnessed in each tableau: Irma, bishop, and sinner in the first; aggressor, thief, and judge in the second; and Irma, general and prostitute/horse in the third. This constancy of direction that maintains the same mirror, *lustre*, and combination of people, is absolutely necessary for his activism. In connection to the figure of the prostitute who is a symbol of the real, Genet establishes a feeling of realness with which he can contrast and thus expose the falseness of the authority figures, and their discourse, through variation, difference, and excess.

The fourth tableau continues the staging of difference via a contrast in form as compared to the first three tableaux. This brief scene is almost entirely stage direction to

reinforce the prominent role of the didascalie in Genet's work. In this tableau, the stage directions use, in an Artaudian way, a gestural and didascalic narrative to communicate the scenario of an old man and a young woman who are waiting for a dirty wig to transform the bourgeois into a beggar. The direction indicates difference in the fact that different actors would play the roles of the reflection of the old man "*Tous les gestes du petit Vieux se reflètent dans les trois miroirs. (Il faut donc trois acteurs tenant les roles de reflets)*"[66] (284). Genet keeps the presence of the triad between the old man, the eroticized female who also maintains an element of animality ("*veste de fourrure*"), and Mme Irma who makes a brief appearance to deliver the dirty wig and a leather whip. After the prostitute violently forces the wig on the head of the old man, he offers her "*un petit bouquet de fleurs artificielles*" (285) only to receive a lash from the whip. The fake flowers reinforce the function of artifice that constructs an empty sign in which the substance does not match the intended meaning, suggestive of fake flower and false judge, bishop, etc. Moreover, the artificial flowers recall the poetic tradition of Baudelairian artifice that Genet brings into presence to establish, as Marty suggests above, Genet's metaphysics that oppose the relation between appearance and function.

An intertextual system is enhanced further with the only spoken part that is a brief dialogic lyric "Le vieux: Et les poux? / La Fille, *très vache*: Y en a" (285). The briefness of the lyric contrasts the extensive didascalie to create further difference and tensions that

[66] The fact that Genet demands other actors playing the role of the images in the mirror suggests a further destabilizing effect through plurality, similar to Artaud's use of mannequins that create *décalage* or the presence of a physical gap between the figure and the referent. In terms of Genet's didascalic language as a type of mirror, Barut states "au final le texte de régie constitue une toile large, un texte que l'on peut parcourir de différentes manières et dans différents sens, où les indications s'appellent entre elles, se reflètent entre elles. Le texte didascalique est Palais de miroirs" (40).

call the reader's attention to the dramatic modes. In terms of intertextuality, the reference to *poux* recalls Chant Deuxième [9] from *Les Chants de Maldoror* that presents eroticized animality as a figure for Lautréamont's prose-poetics.[67] Moreover, the *poux* recalls detailed descriptions of the importance of lice for the criminal vagabonds throughout Genet's *Journal du Voleur*.[68] In this scene we find a plurality of texts as referenced through the didascalic poetics of artificial flowers, the lice on the wig, and the "Venus in Furs" posture of the prostitute that suggests the work of Sacher-Masoch. Through the poetics of props, and their association to the appearance of the actors in the simulation, Genet stages more than the inverted fantasy of a bourgeois man seeking the simulation of the poor and dirty beggar. When read in terms of intertextuality, perhaps the old man covered with lice is a figure for the reader of poetic texts of the past, staged for the purpose of parody and humiliation.

In terms of appearance, Genet situates the physical position of concrete objects to establish material reality. He repeats the presence of the same light fixture to maintain the reader's focus on what is real and what is not. He creates unique associations and bizarre perspectives to challenge the reader's understandings and expectations of the scene and

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[67] Lautréamont narrates the copulation of Maldoror with a female louse that can produce "blocs de poux" that he seeks to put in the sewers "les artères des cités" to dissolve them so they enter the bourgeois home and attack (158-159). I read this as an example of his form that seeks the dissolving of verse structure to produce a fluid prose-poetic of attack.

[68] For example, the lice become a figure for the bond, justification, and physical feeling of the homosexual relation of the narrator and the thief Salvador. The narrator states "Salvador prenait soin de moi, mais la nuit, à la bougie, je recherchais dans les coutures de son pantalon les poux, nos familiers. Les poux nous habitaient. A nos vêtements ils donnaient une animation, une présence qui, disparues, font qu'ils sont morts. Nous aimions savoir--et sentir--pulluller les bêtes translucides . . . Les poux étaient le seul signe de notre prospérité, de l'envers même de la prospérité, mais il était logique qu'en faisant à notre état opérer un rétablissement qui le justifiât, nous justifions du même coup le signe de cet état" (28, 29). Based on this description we understand the figure of the lice as a loaded, poetical sign.

the text. Genet uses *démesure* of authority figures and stable repetition of material props to create the difference inherent in his system. He employs aesthetics of animality, BDSM props and postures, inversion of gender roles, "striptease" costuming, the nude female and male body to give presence and realness to a bizarre and uncanny system of *jouissance*. The erotic is one devoid of actual sexual penetration and is more suggestive of an erotics based on fantasies of power and role, that then corresponds to the exercise of power and influence of these authority figures outside of the brothel, and thus in the real world. Genet makes the erotic a mask for both capitalist consumption in the brothel and a veil to hide the destructive impulses of Evil behind the figures of "good" moral authority. However, he also shows that his text is a mask for other texts. He offers intertextuality as another form of evil, stealing from the past and using or exploiting their systems. It is not only the authority figures that he undermines, but also the authority of the text.

The sound of difference

There is a consistency to aspects of the sound design that sets another constant against which Genet can establish difference to express a critique of authority. We have seen the importance of a textual sound design in the other dramas of this study. For Apollinaire, sound effects are a way to create poetic associations with performed speech as well as disrupt reading of discourse. In his tragedy, Artaud employs a sound design that heightens aesthetics of menace, while also forcing lyric structures into the traditionally silent space of the didascalie to challenge the reader's approach to the form.

In Genet's drama, signifiers of sound effects are used as a constant, interrupting agent to disrupt the performance of the power fantasies while also alluding to another presence of the real. I categorize the use of sound in three ways: the machine gun fire, screams from other rooms, and finally, tones of conversation and silences as indicated by the direction. Through these effects, Genet creates a soundscape to refer to a plurality of spaces including the revolutionary streets outside, the other rooms of scenario fantasy, and the behind the scenes of the Madame's office. These are social spaces associated with forms of power including reactionary authority, progressive revolution and capitalism. These spaces coexist in the scenes through referents of sound. The use of sound effect as a poetic signifier enhances his aesthetic system of difference and excess. This system overloads textual space with a plurality of meaning to further destabilize the audience's perspective, interrupt discourses of power, and express critique through difference.

The first sound effect interrupts Madame Irma's dialogue with the false bishop in the first Tableau: "*On entend soudain un grand cri de douleur poussé par une femme qu'on ne voit pas*." The sound effect undermines vision ("on ne voit pas") and also references an "other" beyond perception. Through the use of sound, Genet brings the occurrences of other rooms into presence to enhance simultaneity and plurality of space. The scream of the unknown woman interrupts the conversation concerning the violent worker revolution outside in the streets. The scream prompts Madame Irma to state "(*Agacée*.) Je leur avais pourtant recommandé d'être silencieux. Heureusement que j'ai pris la précaution de boucher toutes les fenêtres d'un rideau molletonné" (265). The didascalic word of sound works to influence tension indicated by the direction *agacée*.

She describes how she blocked all the windows to muffle the sound. Her response indicates that Madame Irma is in control, and thus becomes an important figure vis-à-vis the system. Her use of the term “boucher” recalls Artaud's use of the term “barrer” in the *Cenci* that structures his power hierarchy related to the gestural movement of blocking bodies. In *Le Balcon,* Madame Irma attempts to block sound, but also vision referenced by the term “fenêtre.” Irma can control the view and the sound and thus seems able to control not only the scenarios of the diegesis, but the theatrical properties in the direction. The sound that she attempts to block references an other. This prompts the question, from where does the sound originate as the judge asks “Ce cri n’était pas joué?” (268). Madame Irma responds “*inquiète* je ne sais pas... qu’en savons-nous, et quelle importance?” (268) Her ambiguity is purposeful to destabilize the audience's perception to challenge their understanding of the scene and question not only the patrons in the brothel, but the workers and revolutionaries outside as well. Is the revolution part of someone's, possibly the reader's, erotic simulation? This technique of destabilizing is essential to his system of difference to make the reader question what is happening during the drama, both inside the brothel and outside in the violent streets.

In the third tableau, the General and Madame Irma discuss the authenticity of the General's costume that determines his power of role, when there is another scream that interrupts his discourse concerning role and function:

> *Soudain un long cri de femme*
> Le Général: Qu'est ce que c'est?
> *Il veut s'approcher de la paroi de droite et déjà se baisse pour regarder, mais Irma intervient.*
> Irma: Rien. . . .

General: Mais ce cri? Un cri de femme. Un appel au secours peut-être? Mon sang qui bout ne fait qu'un tour… Je m'élance….
Irma, *glaciale*: Pas d'histoires ici, calmez-vous. Pour le moment, vous êtes en civil.
General: C'est juste.
Nouveau cri de femme. (279)

The screaming interrupts the General's fantasy, but also provokes an erotic response. To further a sense of interruption, Madame Irma intervenes to stop the General's movement, and even to dissuade him from further investigating the source of the screams. His declaration of heroism "Mon sang qui bout ne fait qu'un tour… Je m'élance…" is a veiled reference to his desired ejaculation. However, Madame Irma is the director of the General's sexual scenarios, and thus his sexuality, so she commands him to calm himself ("calmez-vous "). She reminds him that he is not dressed and therefore has no power or function in the fantasy. This reinforces the fact that costume and appearance are essential to determine power and function. Her command is also indicative of the didascalic imperative of bodily action ("*mais Irma intervient*") to establish her character as a figure for the stage directions. The General is only a simulation, which he is not currently playing as they wait for the prostitute to arrive with the costume. This dynamic of interruption shows that the screams are not part of the fantasy and thus offer a signifier of reality, or at least an otherness outside of the fantasy. The sound effect of screaming interrupts the scenarios to undermine the performance of power discourses that are the fantasies of the authority figures. It also works to strengthen Madame Irma's position as one of control over the material properties of the brothel and the stage direction.

In addition to the screaming from other rooms, another important sound effect is the machine gun fire that echoes throughout the tableaux referred to as "*crépitement de mitrailleuse*" or "*bruit de mitraillade*." Since there is no visual confirmation of violence, and since everything seems different than it appears, one has to wonder whether it is real machine gun fire or another simulation. Once again this ambiguity works to create difference and destabilize the reader's understanding of the scene and the drama as a whole. Even though there is ambiguity, the gunfire maintains a consistent referent: the revolution outside that could be real or just another simulation. But whether or not the signified revolution is real, this does not influence the realness and materiality of the gunfire sound in the direction. Through difference, the material realness of sound effect disturbs the abstract concept it signifies, and in turn, provokes a political commentary. It raises the question, is revolution a signifier of real change or just another performance of power? This question extends Genet's activist critique beyond the reactionary authority figures to the progressive workers led by Roger the plumber and Chantal the former prostitute turned *Marianne* figure. A close reading of the textual references to the machine gun fire expands an understanding of the connection between Genet's stage directions and aesthetics of politics.

In the preface to *Le Balcon*, Genet is clear in his critique of progressive poetics. He states "quelques poètes de nos jours, se livrent à une très curieuse opération: ils chantent le Peuple, la Liberté, la Révolution, etc" (262). Genet claims that political poets render their ideologies as abstract symbols, and thus create a separation between the reader and these concepts that results in an undermining abstraction of their material

cause: "nos poètes tuent ce qu'ils voulaient faire vivre" (262). This is why he turns to the material conditions of the didascalie to enhance the aesthetics of politics involved in his work. For example, he employs the language of direction to signify the closing-in of the revolution into brothel. The sound of the gunfire is often referenced in prepositional phrases that situate the machine gun fire vis-à-vis the simulation. For instance, the third tableau concludes with "*au loin crépitement de mitrailleuse*" (284) while the fourth tableau ends "*tout près, un crépitement de mitrailleuse*" (285). This prepositional placement of the gunfire in relation to the locus of the drama adds a perspective of closing in, which also parallels the plot of Roger the revolutionary entering the Balcony in the final tableau. The phrases that establish the sound design of the machine gunfire work to signify the nearness of the revolution. This use of prepositional phrases to establish sound gradually breaks down the barrier of difference that separates revolutionaries and reactionaries to render them as equal opposites, like the reflections of the mirror. Moreover, the didascalie, in its essence, is a reader focused textual space. The reader is brought closer to the actions as well, and thus the activist system that challenges the reader to uncover truths behind illusions.

Furthermore, an unpacking of the term "mitraille," that he uses to refer to the gunfire, offers information concerning Genet's critique of revolution as well as enhancing the connection between didascalic language and an expression of protest against revolution. In modern times it refers to shrapnel from bomb blasts as well as automatic gunfire. The etymology of "mitraille" extends beyond gunfire or pieces of metal, to

pieces of currency.[69] The machine gun fire could also signify the sound of money. Genet then parodies the revolution of the *ouvriers* by making the sign used to define them throughout the play as the sound of "mitraille" with a more subtle meaning related to the sound of money. We can understand this as perhaps indicating the falseness of the revolution that is just another facet of the power fantasy of the authority figures. But they are also bourgeois patrons paying to pretend to be figures of authority, in a sense critiquing the bourgeois lust for power that manifests in capitalist wealth or progressive liberalism. Another interpretation is that the workers involved in the revolution, and the poets who shout progressive change, are all just making the sound of money ("crépitement de mitraille.") Genet parodies revolution, and its related art, as another extension of capitalist exploitation. However one interprets the simulation, one thing is clear: nothing is real and all signified speech is inauthentic, except for the didascalic signifier that establishes the consistent vision and sounds that repeat throughout the drama.

It is not only sound effects that convey a realness to disturb fantasies of power discourse, but also varying tones and silences. In the fifth Tableau, Genet presents a scene that exists outside of any power fantasy. In doing so, he stages a 'behind the scenes' look in the brothel as Madame Irma talks candidly with her accountant and prostitute Carmen, before the arrival of Arthur the pimp and George the chief of Police. Madame Irma discusses the day's events and the revolution with Carmen who counts the money, another metonymy to associate revolution with capitalism. This scene establishes a sense of

[69] *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi, ATILF - CNRS & Université de Lorraine.

realness by presenting to the reader the daily reality of the brothel outside of performance. Sound and silence play an important role. Their conversation becomes more natural to express different emotions and tones as indicated in directions like "*dure*," "*même ton que tout à l'heure*," "*déconcerté*," "*choqué,*" and others (286). These didascalic prompts of emotion are meant to change the tone of the conversation to render it natural and emotive like real people talking. This establishes a rhythm to the scene that is less forced or contrived like the conversation in the other rooms. These emotive didascalies establish a difference between real emotion and the often-emotionless simulations of power discourse and command that are the fantasies.

Throughout this scene there are also pauses and silences that work to enhance a rhythm for the reading of the work. There are few silences in the other rooms of power fantasy. Genet demonstrates how language stimulates the erotic scenario, and thus spoken language and discourse are vital to determine power performance and function. For example, during the post-sex dressing of the Bishop, he continually talks while he stares in the mirror to indulge in his simulated power connected to his speech about the prélat and the costume. But outside of the simulation, in the manager's office, and thus in reality behind the scenes, the silence enhances a naturalist effect that makes it seem like real conversation between the Madame and Carmen. It is almost as if Genet hints through his abundant use of silence, in the didascalie of the fifth tableau, that the discussion between Irma and Carmen shows a certain truth outside of the fantasy. This truth is the power of the Madame who controls the scenarios, while also expressing the power of money and discourse in bourgeois society.

Another element to his poetics of difference in this fifth scene is the contrast between the silences and a constant "sonnerie" that interrupts the silence, and the dialogue. This sound refers to an *appareil* that allows Irma to monitor every room in the Balcony. Madame Irma can view the tableaux through this apparatus that is connected to both visual sense and the sonic because of its bell. The *appareil* is only referenced in the didascalie, and thus creates an association between the mute-loquacious object that is a silent but expressive witness to the other rooms and the mode of the direction. In this way, Madame Irma controls the stage direction, associated with the *appareil*, to look into different aspects of the dramatic spaces in the brothel. This calls attention to the tension between the dialogic scenarios of power fantasy and the didascalic modes of real sense like vision and sound. Genet employs one (the didascalic poetic) to expose the other (dialogic discourse). There is a voyeurism and an overhearing inherent in his use of sound effect. Through screams, gun fire, tones and bells Genet brings the audience's attention to overhear an 'Other' that exists outside, behind the mask of difference. This is the purpose of his theater, to employ the poetic space of didascalie to give presence to the realness of the Other. In confronting the other, one confronts the desires obscured by culture and repressed by power.

The Poetics of Bodily Gesture

The gestural movement of the character, as indicated in the directions and the dynamic with other bodies, works to influence a difference in meaning and convey an

expression of critique, similar to sound and appearance. For example, in the final tableau, Roger enters the brothel as a simulation of the chief of police. This outside figure inside the brothel symbolizes Genet's staging of the breakdown of difference as the worker revolutionary invades the simulation. In this scene, Roger castrates himself in a gesture of defiance to attempt an undermining of the authority of the Police. The didascalie presents the action as "*Roger a sorti un couteau et, le dos au public, fait le geste de se châtrer*" (347). Instead of focusing on the symbolism of the castration,[70] I would like to examine how the stage direction presents it as a gesture: "*fait le geste de se châtrer*." For Genet's poetics, the revolt is not in the act of castration, but in the theatrical gesture indicative of a material poetics related to bodily movement. The system of difference continues to influence an ambiguity and plurality of meaning in the action of "*fait le geste*." Is it Roger the actor, the plumber, the revolutionary, the simulated Chief? As I have shown in other examples, Genet pollutes, or dilutes, the signifier with an excess of meaning to weaken its essence, but also to expand the meaning to influence all levels of the diegetic and extra-diegetic modes. In the expression "*faire le geste,*" Genet's action speech of gesture, similar to Artaud's poetics, demonstrates to the audience the expressive quality of the didascalic mode that offers a bodily poetics.

In terms of an aesthetic of politics, Genet exhibits that gesture influences function and role in hierarchies of power, just as much as the appearance of costume or the sound of spoken discourse. For example in the first tableau, the power, inherent in the function

[70] For interpretations of Roger's gesture of castration see footnote 111 (*Théâtre*, 1175-1176). See also Lorenso Chiesa's article "The first gram of jouissance: Lacan on Genet's *Le Balcon*" (13).

of a “real” Bishop, is not only defined via his clothing, but also loaded ritual gesture. The Bishop states while he is being undressed from the costume:

> Les péchés, tu les as bien commis?
> La femme: oui
> L'évêque: Tu as bien fait les gestes? Tous les gestes?
> La femme: Oui
> L'évêque: Et quand ma main baguée se posait sur ton front en te pardonnant…
> La femme: Oui (267)

In this scene, Genet shows the reader the importance of gesture as it corresponds to power. The movement of the body establishes a power dynamic based in religious faith between the bishop and the sinner. The Bishop states how his ringed finger when placed upon her sinning forehead absolves and pardons her. However, in this *tableau*, the Bishop does not perform this gesture. He merely questions the false sinner and describes the gesture and its function after the fact to create tension between his words and actions. The didascalic mode works to undermine his discourse because he does not make the gesture, he merely speaks about it. In the aforementioned scenes of benediction and castration, Genet does employs the term "geste" to indicate the performative aspect of their function, whether revolutionary worker or reactionary bishop. The power inherent in social function is performance, and thus, not real. Like the sound effect, the light fixture, and the material costume, the gesture of the moving body is real, but its associated meaning is contrived. Via his textual dynamics that create difference, Genet shows to the reader the importance of gesture and bodily language inherent in power role and hierarchy. Genet exposes that the bishop bases his function in society off ritualized gesture, costume, and discourse, all of which are loaded with meaning that society plays along with, but are not

actually real. The use of gesture is another way to expose inauthenticity, and thus the illusion of power. Moreover, since a patron in a brothel describes the gesture, Genet also eroticizes this gesture in order to create a sense of satire to further destabilize the Bishop's function.

In the second *tableau*, there is an interesting staging of the gesture of reading. The didascalie presents the action as "*il cherche sous sa jupe et ramène un livre*" (272). This action parallels his command to the Bourreau to search under the skirt of the *voleuse* for her stolen objects (that are in fact not stolen but are just part of the simulation and belong to the brothel.) The book in question that the judge removes is the law code. The judge's book and the thief's object occupy the same place: under a robe. In this way, both objects share a contiguous space, and thus are connected through metonymy. Genet's didascalic poetics create a link between the stolen object kept near the thief's vagina and the law code kept near the judge's penis. The gestural movement of exposing what is under the robe shows the function of gesture in the drama, that is, to expose and uncover. The poetics expose that the 'stolen' merchandise and the law code are both silent props that, through the mute speech properties of the direction, express a poetic association to render them both as false, stolen, and thus criminal. Through this association Genet renders the law code as a criminal prop to undermine its role in society, and also the power of the court that controls the code. As the tableau progresses, the didascalie continually repeats the gesture of reading "*reprise de la lecture,*" "*il continue à lire*," "*il lit dans le Code*," "*lisant*." Genet stages the act of reading, not only by the judge but by the reader too, who is technically reading the scene. Genet brings textuality into presence through the staging

of reading a work. The work being read is presented as both law code, via the didascalic description, and criminal book via the metonymy between judge and thief. This staging of textuality, and the act of reading, expands the plurality of meaning around the prop of the book. Through this excess of meaning Genet stages difference to signal that the book being read in this scene is fake, like the prop of stolen goods. Furthermore, the gesture calls attention to the act of reading. The poetics of difference and excess prompts the question: what is the reader reading in this scene? Is it the law code, a prop in a play, the text of *Le Balcon* or something else?

With a poetics of gesture in *Le Balcon*, Genet creates difference to undermine revolutionary, judicial, and religious power. Genet dictates that the real authority is the material world, as expressed in stage directions in which theatrical properties of sound, appearance, bodily movement and object convey a symbolic language. To return to Roger and the final scene, the castration is not wherein the political or aesthetic activism functions. It is the poetics of gesture within the space of didascalie that expresses revolt. In this act, Roger hopes to undermine the authority of the Chief who fantasizes about being part of the simulacrum of authority figures like the bishop, judge, and general. But Roger fails as the Chief exclaims "Bien joué. Il a cru me posséder." Then, the didascalie indicates the failure of Roger's act, and thus the failure of the revolution, that is merely another simulation. The direction describes the Police Chief as "*Il porte la main à sa braguette, soupèse très manifestement ses couilles et, rassuré, pousse un soupir*" (347). The difference is created in the contrast between Roger making the gesture to castrate himself, and the Police chief making the gesture of grabbing his balls ("très

manifestement") and sighing a relief, all indicative of communicating through the physical body. For Genet, power is found in the real, material world of the flesh, and the expressive mode of the flesh is the didascalie, wherein we find Genet's political expression.

From these close readings, we understand that gesture, appearance, and sound are integral to the activist poetics that employ excess of meaning in order to undermine discourses of power through creating difference. Brothel, stage, street, word, spectator, and reader all exist simultaneously through the mechanics of the stage direction. Within this textual space of material condition and didactic imperative one can gain the understanding of Genet's theater that challenges the reader to look under the mask, under the robe, and underneath the simulation for a glimpse of real truth. With the didascalie, Genet establishes a constant of material reality that he can then juxtapose with performance to create his poetics of difference to challenge the reader to question authorities, both reactionary and progressive. My analysis shows that multiple definitions exist in the spaces of his words like "évêque," "juge," "voleuse," "Irma," and "bourreau" to name a few. Furthermore, multiple spaces exist inside his tableaux as referenced by sound, while a plurality of actions can exist in a single gesture. His displacement and difference brings presence to the Other, forcing the reader to confront it. This plurality also extends to a level of text for the drama. He stages reading and his characters, like Madame Irma, often bridge the gap between the diegesis and the extradiegetic realms of the drama. His work engages with theatrical form in a metatextual system of communication between figures and modes. As such, his poetics of difference in the

drama indicate the possibility of a plurality of textual space, or in other words, multiple texts may exist in his drama, thus establishing an intertextuality. In the next section, I employ an intertextual reading to suggest an 'other' behind his words. Through examining the other text in his drama, specifically Sade's *Justine*, scholarship gains a better understanding of how his activist theater works through exhibition.

Staging Sade

In the chapter "Antonin Artaud and Jean Genet" from *The Theater of Revolt*, Robert Brustein describes *Le Balcon* as follows: "the opening scenes of the play seem like an actualization of one of Artaud's scenarios, because – in their unification of power, cruelty, and sex – they owe a good deal to the writings of the Marquis de Sade" (395). In this section my analysis furthers the connection between one of the opening scenes in *Le Balcon* and Sade's writings and on both a textual and contextual level. In doing so, I intend to highlight a function of Genet's didascalic poetic that seeks an expression of protest corresponding to the 1956 court case against his publisher J-J Pauvert. Protest is central to Genet's *oeuvre* that shares Sade and Artaud's aim of creating an insurrectional energy through aesthetics of cruelty.[71] Michel Corvin, like Brustein, employs the term *révolte* to an understanding of Genet's theater that seeks "la nécéssité, pour une explosion

[71] Artaudian cruelty is very much derived from Sadean cruelty related to Sade's political and social philosophy described in detail in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir:* "la cruauté n'est autre chose que l'énergie de l'homme que la civilisation n'a point corrompue." "Cruauté" for Sade is another term for vice, which Sade politicizes in the historical context of Post-Terror France to mean man's "état immoral" that is "un état de mouvement perpétuel qui le rapproche de l'insurrection nécessaire." For more on Artaudian cruelty, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

insurrectionelle, de rester en mouvement perpetuel . . . La révolte n'a pas de lieu et ne doit pas en avoir" (Théâtre, 1143).[72] According to these authors, society, and its expression through art, needs to be in perpetual motion to avoid stagnation and death, and the revolt inherent in insurrection is the means to keep this force alive. Artaud, Genet, and briefly Sade, express their insurrection via an aesthetic activism involving changes to traditional forms, most notably for the current study, the didascalie. This textual space conveys their poetic expression of insurrection through material conditions, action speech of performance and didactic imperative. Genet differs in the fact that it is not *cruauté*[73] that creates this insurrectional energy, but anything society defines as evil ("le mal"). In the "Avertissement" to *Le Balcon,* Genet states that an expression of evil through staged poetics creates the aesthetic force needed to expose us for who we really are: "que le mal sur la scène explose, nous montre nus, nous laisse hagards s'il se peut et n'ayant de recours qu'en nous." (261). It is through a theatrical exhibition of Evil – the scenes, postures, and language that authority seek to control and suppress - that society can get underneath to the naked truth behind the processes of power. In terms of an exhibition of evil, Michel Corvin details Genet's method as: "scandaliser, tel est le pouvoir d'un théâtre

[72] This quote recalls Genet's description of theater, from the preface to *Le Balcon,* as an explosion through the aesthetic violence of representations of evil, which is necessary to turn us inside out and expose truths. Corvin's description of the transitory essence of revolt, that has no fixed place, corresponds to Rancière's view of mute speech and the mute-loquacious letter that is fixed on the page, but can travel freely to become a disruptive force.

[73] Genet even mocks the term cruauté. In the first scene the bishop describes a prélat, a religious official, as needing "cruauté. Et par-delà de cette cruauté – et par elle – une demarche habile, vigoureuse vers l'Absence, vers la Mort." In this way, cruelty leads to negation. The bishop's theory is even negated as Madame Irma interrupts his monologue to ask him to pay "deux mille, c'est deux mille, et pas d'histoires." She reminds the reader that this man is not a bishop. He is a john in a brothel, and this further undermines his metaphysical theories of *cruauté*. Furthermore, the bishop's description of cruelty as vigorous march towards absence absolutely recalls Artaud, and perhaps Genet is mocking Artaud as some fake bishop. Artaud was exiled from surrealism in 1925 for being "too catholic" according to Breton and Aragon.

qui entraine le public non sur le chemin du bien mais dans les ornières du Mal (laideur morale, obscénité, perversité)" (1161). For this representation of evil in his theater, I believe Genet, like Artaud, turned to Sade who was posthumously making headlines at the same time Genet was developing his drama.

Under Article 287 of the French Penal code: "Toute exposition ou distribution de chansons, pamphlets, figures, ou images contraires aux bonne mœurs sera punie d'une amende de 1.000 à 30.000 francs, d'un emprisonnement d'un mois à un an" (Pauvert, 21). Based on this law concerning the distribution of art in society, Genet's publisher J-J Pauvert was tried on the 15th of December 1956 at the 17th correctional court in Paris. In the Acte d'accusation, the tribunal reads the charges against the publisher as such:

> Vous êtes poursuivi pour avoir, à Paris, en 1953 et 1954 […] étant gérant de la Société d'Éditions Librairie Jean-Jacques Pauvert, fabriqué et detenu en vue de faire commerce ou distribution, transporté, vendu, mise en vente, distribué, ou remis en vue de la distribution, des ouvrages qui sont respectivement intitulés: *La Philosophie dans le boudoir, Les 120 Journées de Sodome, La Nouvelle Justine ou les malheurs de la Vertu*, tous contraire aux bonnes mœurs et ayant fait l'objet en 1954, d'un avis de la Commission Consultative Spéciale. (10)

According to this court proceeding, the publishing of Sade's writings was dangerous to the moral order of a post-war, reactionary discourse defined in the law Code, supervised by the Court, and enforced by the police. The crimes of the accused were merely texts with titles: *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, *La Nouvelle Justine*. The literary elite condemned the case, as defense witnesses - friends, correspondents, and mentors of Genet including André Breton, Jean Cocteau, Georges Bataille, and Jean Paulhan - testified to Pauvert's innocence through an in-court discussion of the style deficiencies in the works that render them similar to academic,

medical and legal proceedings.[74] The defense's vigorous support for Pauvert and his right to publish Sade's works was to no avail. On the 10th of January 1957 the court ordered Pauvert to pay a fine of 120,000 francs (perhaps a reference to the *120 journées*?) and commanded the destruction of all copies (126). The court judged the work to be "les manifestations les plus dégradantes de la dépravation humaine" (132). This court case is an example of text as crime, and specifically, its distribution to the streets of France. Furthermore, the court case is an example of a real authority forcing regulation on the distribution of language through codes and laws, therefore an example of a battle between texts: law code versus pornographic text.

In *Le Balcon*, there is a connection to the judicial court as the second tableau stages a scene that simulates a judge's power fantasy. Michel Corvin and Albert Dichy explain that the year 1956 marks "le retour de Genet sur la scène littéraire après une longue période de silence et une profonde crise existentielle" (1119). Genet's return to theater with *Le Balcon* signifies a "new direction in his imaginative and fictional response to the world he lived in" (Bradby, 19). In that world, at that time, his friends and mentors were all testifying in support of his editor whose only crime was publishing. Genet must have taken notice of the court proceedings that sought to regulate the textual spectacle of an evil deemed contrary to French moral "good." I argue that Genet, via his poetics of

[74] Pauvert's lawyer Maurice Garçon defended the right to publish unique and historically misunderstood literature by citing similar court cases against such canonical works as *Madame Bovary* and *Les Fleurs du mal.* Cocteau said Sade posed no threat because his writings are repetitive and dull. Bataille declared that reading Sade is a journey into the darkest regions of man and necessary for the artist, the philosopher, and the ontological explorer. Jean Paulhan stated under oath that "presque tous les écrivains représentatifs du dix-neuvième siècle sont sortis de Sade: Lamartine, Baudelaire, Nietszche" (48). Paulhan's grossly generalized flattery shows that if these pillars of modernity are accepted on Bac preparation corpuses, then Sade should be made available to the public.

difference, offers Sade's ideas and writings to the public through the dramatic text of *Le Balcon*. The Pauvert trial adds another aspect to the socio-historical context with which Genet was fully engaged to explode and expose as he states in both the Pauvert letter and the preface to *Le Balcon*: "L'œuvre sera une explosion active, un acte à partir duquel le public réagit" (261). Even though Genet never specifically references the court case, the historical connection between Genet's theater and Pauvert's trial offers a plausible approach to read *Le Balcon* as a response to the authoritarian control over text. An intertextual reading develops how Genet directly stages Sade's writings, especially in the second *tableau*, to exhibit banned text, undermine judicial power, and subvert the court's ruling. Genet's aesthetic activism employs a didascalic poetic to materialize banned text in order to critique censorship that authority uses to maintain power via silencing insurrectional works.

Plural judges, same injustice and a parody for protest

The intertextual reading focuses on the second tableau, prompted by the fact that, as I showed in the last section, Genet deliberately presents intertextuality through the gesture of the judge reading a book, which is the law code. Genet's poetics of difference, excess, and plurality of meaning exhibit that the judge is false judge, the thief is false thief, and the law code is false book. This method suggests that the text of the drama holds the possibility of being a false text. Through an analysis of the dialogic language in the second tableau, we can understand just which text Genet is forcing the public to read,

and speak as a simulation. It is no wonder that the dialogic mode presents the intertextuality because throughout the drama, the spoken discourses of power fantasy exhibit falseness. Furthermore, we can examine who controls the scenario and the performance, specifically Madame Irma, to gain an understanding of Genet's use of staging text as a form of prostitution. This act is then connected to his aesthetic activism because he employs the didascalic poetic to give presence to banned text and then, in a certain sense, prostitutes it to parody and undermine the ruling of the court.

As stated above, the second *tableau* presents a scene between a simulated judge and thief. I read this scene as a staging of the trial in *Justine ou Les malheurs de la vertu,* which Sade expands a bit in *La Nouvelle Justine*. Speaking under the simulated name of "Thérèse," Justine recounts "Nous fûmes bientôt à Lyon; on me précipita dès en arrivant dans le cachot des criminels, et j'y fus écrouée comme incendiaire, fille de mauvaise vie, meurtrière d'enfant et voleuse" (Sade, *vol. 2*, 368). Justine's false identity as a "voleuse" corresponds to her time spent with the group of thieves in the forest of Bondy, as well as the sign of the thief branded on her skin by the incestuous surgeon Rodin, as she confirms "le bourreau me marque comme une criminelle" (384). Her body, like that of the victimized prostitute in the second tableau, becomes a material sign, or a theatrical property in a sense, for a thief that enhances the bodily communication witnessed throughout the drama. However, for both sexual objects - Justine and the prostitute - this sign of thief is false as they did not in fact commit the crime, but are only forced to play along with this simulation of guilt for the erotic power plays of their common antagonist: the judge.

In *Le Balcon* the Judge exclaims: “de tes beaux yeux je veux voir jaillir l'eau tiède. Oh! Je veux que tu en sois trempée. Pouvoir des larmes!” (*Théâtre*, 272). This eroticism of tears recalls Sade's erotic aesthetic, repeated many times over the course of the narrative in *Justine* as “[mon sein] était inondé de mes larmes,” (Sade, *Vol. 2*, 371) “mes yeux inondés de pleurs qu'il suçait de même avec lubricité” (162) and “mes larmes coulent. Il les dévore” (163). One of the first descriptions of the physical portrait of Justine begins “Justine en larmes” (135). Tears become a material signifier of bodily language that express her identity as martyr of virtue as she states “n'éprouvant plus mon existence que par ma douleur et mes larmes” (372). Sade connects these tears to the libidinous desires and crimes of his libertines. For example, as Justine awaits trial in her cell in Lyon, she implores a former priest to help her unfortunate situation as she stands accused of several crimes despite her actual innocence. The priest dismisses her and she shouts:

> Tigre, m'écriai-je en larmes . . . La violence de mes mouvements avait fait disparaitre les voiles qui couvraient mon sein; il était nu, mes cheveux y flottaient en désordre, il était inondé de mes larmes; j'inspire des désirs à ce malhonnête homme… des désirs qu'il veut satisfaire à l'instant . . . tout devient la proie de ses regards, de ses attouchements et de ses perfides caresses; il assouvit enfin ses désirs. (370)

The presence of tears on her exposed breast inspires the sexual lust of the “malhônnete” priest who uses the falseness of appearance to cover his crimes: “on me croit maître de votre confession” (370). The seemingly endless and repetitive tears of Justine, which augment the sexual fury of her aggressors, contrast the inability of the “voleuse” to cry in *Le Balcon*. In this way, the intertextuality submits to Genet's system of difference. Through this difference Genet creates parody to render the sadist act as

comical. In response to the judge's demand for tears the "voleuse" states "ce n'est pas facile. Tout à l'heure j'ai essayé de pleurer" (272). Even though the false Judge commands tears, the prostitute and performer can't make them and there is a *décalage* that parodies both the sadistic desire of the false Judge, as well as the Sadean erotic of endless tears.

This inability and powerlessness to make tears also begins to highlight a reversal of power roles in the scene, which the editors of Genet's theater describe as "un renversement de situation où le Juge qui torture sadiquement sa victime en la soumettant au fouet du Bourreau, devient à son tour le souffre-douleur de la Voleuse" (*Théâtre*, 1122). The roles of sexual subject and object across the narrative are continually static in *Justine,* but transitory in the *tableaux* of *Le Balcon*. This instability of the sadistic power dynamic further parodies and undermines the impact of Sadean violence to weaken the court's ruling concerning its danger to society. In *Le Balcon*, the judge becomes the object of the erotic syntax when the prostitute commands him several times to "Lèche." This change in posture, that corresponds to a reversal of power, is determined in the space of the didascalie: "*Le juge, qui était à genoux, se couche à plat ventre et rampe doucement en direction de la Voleuse*" (276). The difference here is found in the transition of power from the authority figure to the voleuse who controls the command of direction ("*direction de la voleuse*"). The judge going to the ground to crawl echoes Justine's position in the prison: "Je me précipite à terre" (Sade, *Vol. 2*, 383). The Judge is now horizontal on the ground in the same powerless position as Justine. The Voleuse described in the didascalie as "hautaine" commands the judge "appelez-moi Madame et réclamez poliment" (*Théâtre*, 276). The actress, still a simulation for Justine as voleuse,

is able to express a command of power that overturns the dynamic to render the judge as the victim when he begs: “Vouez, je vous en supplie. Ne me laissez pas dans une pareille posture” (276). Genet gives a performative voice to the false thief who represents the character of Justine, but perhaps, Sade and Pauvert as well. In doing so, in this scene of fantasy, these figures can take a certain revenge on the judge through commanding and emasculating him. Through staging the intertextuality, Genet offers the victims, the character of Justine and the text *Justine*, a redemptive voice to command a sense of power against the judge who controls their distribution as both character and text. Genet reverses the judge's authority and renders him weak and destabilized. Through these intertextual references, Genet's parody extends beyond judge and criminal to undermine the law code and the court via a protest that consists of staging, or publishing in a certain sense, the banned text.

Furthermore, the presence of the third member of the scene--*le bourreau*--strengthens critique of authority, while also parodying the Sadean text to lessen its danger. In the drama, the aggressor is first described as a vicious, virile, animalistic force, but the reader learns from a slip of the tongue by the “voleuse” that his real name is Arthur, and he is a pimp and worker in the brothel. This humanizes the aggressor and renders his ferocious animality as just another simulation. This triad posture of judge, *bourreau*, and *voleuse* echoes the scene in *Justine* when she is removed from her prison cell and forced into sex acts as punishment for her false crimes. She recounts: “tous deux abusent de moi, tous deux m'outragent, tous deux hâtent ma perte. La fortune les comble de faveurs, et je cours à la mort” (Sade, *Vol. 2*, 384). The orgy is comprised of a judge -

M. de Cardoville - and Saint-Florent, the businessman who rapes Justine in the forest early on in the *conte*. This scene is a parody of justice as the tribunal is an orgy that does not take place in a court, but rather in the secluded sadean *secret* described as "aussi décorés que mystérieux" (373) indicative of a *bordel de luxe* like *Le Grand balcon*. The character Saint-Florent is described throughout *Justine* as "un monstre" as well as "une bête féroce," "un tigre," and several times as "bourreau." The physical descriptions of Saint-Florent correspond to those of Arthur the *bourreau* in *Le Balcon* described as "*un géant, nu jusqu'à la ceinture. Très musclé [...] de sort qu'il semble être pourvu d'une queue*" (*Théâtre*, 270). This portrait of physical force, nakedness and the perception of a tail illustrate the raw power and animality linking Arthur to the "tigre" Saint-Florent, armed with a penis that Justine describes as "un monstre; je frémis quand je pensai que tel est le dard qui m'avait immolée" (Sade, *Vol. 2*, 376). This consistency of character and correspondence between the texts strengthens the intertextual reading.

The simulated animality of the characters, Saint-Florent and Arthur, establishes their virile, sexual power that contrasts the impotence of the judges to establish another example of difference to undermine the authority figure. The monstrous size of Saint-Florent's penis is juxtaposed against the small, almost non-existent *impuissant* penis of the judge M. Cardoville who is described as "quoiqu'il fut en déshabillé, il était facile de voir que c'était un robin" (374).[75] The judge describes Justine's vagina, perpetually violated through rape across the tale, as "beaucoup trop large pour moi" (375). Sade often

[75] According to the *Trésor de la Langue française* the term "robin" was used during Sade's era pejoratively against a magistrate or judicial official "homme de robe" and "un homme de peu" or "a man of little." *TLFi : Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*, http://www.atilf.fr/tlfi, ATILF - CNRS & Université de Lorraine.

employs *démesure*, in both a large and minuscule sense, to create a difference used to enhance the ferocity or coldness of the libertine authority figures. The monstrous stature of Saint-Florent's violent erection effectively magnifies the impotence of the judge through an association of difference. In *Le Balcon* the impotence of the judge is signified by the fact that he does not aggressively strike the "voleuse", he can't make her cry, and he crawls in the beginning and the end as sexual object. His impotence renders Arthur the *bourreau* as the active subject of the erotic aggression, the one who strikes ("cogner") at the command of the judge, who describes Arthur in terms representing a phallus such as "mon énorme bras," "trop lourd," "trop gros," "qui marche tout seul à côté de moi," "bras, quintal de viande, sans toi je ne serais rien" (*Théâtre*, 275).[76] The judge repeats the signifier "bras" but the reader understands through the poetic description of fleshy abundance, thickness, spatial positioning, and the setting of the brothel that the arm of the aggressor who strikes is a symbol for a detached phallus of fantasy. Genet stages the *bourreau* as an extension of the judge's sexual psychology. Arthur's animality, muscular physique and whip as tail (another phallic reference) signify masculine virility, but as the judge says, this virility is separate and outside of the judge. Both Genet and Sade use the *bourreau* as a figure, or one could say a prop, to create difference and express the impotence of the judge, not only in his physical sexuality, but also in his authoritative function.

[76] This idea of the *bras* as phallic, psychological aggressor recalls the relation between the narrator and Stilitano in *Journal du Voleur*. The narrator laments the break up of their criminal, ambiguously sexual relation as "je n'étais plus le bras de Stilitano" (200). In this way, the arm is a figure for a criminal and psychosexual relation. This further undermines the judge, through his relation with the *bourreau,* that is a criminal dynamic and thus contrary to their apparent function as figures of justice.

The judge has no material, physical, or real power. His authority depends on both the *bourreau* and the *victime* playing along with the simulation. But more importantly, Genet shows that it is also the reader, and thus the public, who gives the authority to the function of judge by being complicit with their power fantasies. Genet shows that the judge would be powerless and impotent in the material world outside of the fantasy. The aggressor though is materially powerful, based on his description in the didascalie. The *bourreau* extends the command and enacts sentence of the judge either through the gallow, the whip or the phallus. But once again this signals the importance of flesh as material power. In connecting this to the dramatic form, we understand the command form of didascalie as a space for a materially based poetics of expression concerning the marginality of the banned text. The intertextual reading allows one to understand the victim as the Sadean text, and thus his expression as a sociopolitical protest of censorship. To further an understanding of Genet's drama as an aesthetic activism of protest, we should explore the one who controls the scenario: the Madame. When the intertextuality is placed in her hands, we understand Genet's system of a didascalic poetic as a means of prostituting banned text, or a *putanisme*.

Putanisme

In the preface "Comment jouer le Balcon" - written in 1962 in response to Peter Zadek's 1957 London production and Peter Brook's 1960 Paris production - Genet speaks in polemic fashion to the next generations of directors. A section of the essay describes

the importance of the relation between Carmen and Irma, instructing the reader to: "[e]ssayer de rendre sensible la rivalité qui parait exister entre Irma et Carmen. Je veux dire: qui dirige – la maison et la pièce? Carmen ou Irma" (259). He challenges his reader to figure out who is in control of the scene, the brothel, and the work. This is reflected in the dialogue between the characters as they discuss the realness of authority figures. Madame Irma is the one who knows the real behind the illusions.

> Carmen: Desquels parlez-vous?
> Irma: Des vrais.
> Carmen: Lesquels sont vrais? Ceux de chez nous?
> Irma: Les autres. (290)

Since Genet's method of difference and plurality shows that the stage, the brothel, and the revolutionary streets are all reflections within the same space - the text - it is essential to pinpoint the figure of power that controls them. In the fifth tableau, Carmen speaks in a meta-theatrical way to describe Madame Irma's method in the brothel: "Autour de votre belle personne vous avez pu organiser un théâtre fastueux, une fête dont les splendeurs vous enveloppent, vous dissimulent au monde. A votre putanisme il fallait cet apparat" (294). Her method of directing the house of illusions--that is at once brothel and theater--is defined as *putanisme*. An analysis of the figures of the prostitute and the madame in the drama are central to an understanding of Genet's work. Even though Genet's drama seeks to undermine authority, there is one figure that maintains power throughout: the Madame. She is a figure for the director in Genet's system because as the Madame, the "mère maquerelle et patronne de boxon" (289) she controls the scenario in the diegetic space of the brothel and the extra-diegetic spaces of the stage and the text. If we read the role of the Madame through the proposed intertextuality, as well as Genet's

poetics of stage direction, then her purpose becomes clearer: simply speaking, she exhibits Sade's text to prostitute it.

Madame Irma describes her role as “je n'en suis que la directrice” (293). She confirms this at the end of the play when she transitions from Fake Queen to *régisseur*. She turns off the lights ("*seule et continuant d'éteindre*") that, as shown in the previous section, are understood as a textual figure for the realness of vision necessary to perceive the illusions of authority. She needs to prepare the scene for tomorrow's illusion and performance, so she speaks directly to the reader thus merging the diegetic and extra-diegetic realms: “Tire les verrous . . . place les housses . . . il va falloir recommencer… tout rallumer… s'habiller les déguisements! Redistribuer les rôles… endosser le mien . . . je vais préparer mes costumes et mes salons pour demain. Vous passerez à droite, par la ruelle” (349). She speaks in a directorial manner to the crowd, collapsing the modes of didascalic and dialogic into an expression of command and authority. She also is in control of the “machinerie” of the house, the lighting, the costuming, and the roles, etc. She is director and *régisseur,* or stage manager, as well as the *patronne de boxon,* but also the author, or the *metteur-en-texte,* who controls the scenarios within the brothel, and thus the text. Furthermore it is not only the text of the drama in her control, but also the simulated Sadean text that Genet brings into presence through his didascalic poetic. In this way, the character of Madame Irma is central to an understanding of the activist system that is *putanisme*. The prostitute in Genet's work is the hero who is a figure for activism. Irma states “chaque putain doit pouvoir affronter n'importe quelle situation” (295). Furthermore she describes the prostitute as a social function who must “exalter ton

métier et d'en faire une gloire. Fais-le briller" (295). The prostitute exists in between the walls of the brothel that are the barriers of difference to function as mediators who must "shine" their power because during every revolution there is always "la putain exaltée qui chante une Marseillaise et se revirginise" (295). The prostitute is a dramatic hero who is continually reinvigorated and renewed with each scenario, similarly to the mute speech of the text, revitalized with every reading for a purpose of disruption. We can understand an association between the drama in book form and the prostitute whose distributions in society are regulated by the court.

Genet stages the text as a prostituted body that through erotic aesthetics offers itself to a public as a commodity. But, there is a purpose for the prostitute beyond a commodity market. The prostitution of the text is necessary to provoke a social politics by exhibiting systems of censorship and authority that control the distribution of jouissance. The audience is the john, the trick, who purchases the ticket or the text and enjoys, or abhors, the simulation. However, the reader after "laying" with the prostitute and reading the text, must feel a sense of guilt or shame inherent in being complicit with crime or evil. This feeling challenges the reader to return home, where "tout, n'en doutez pas, sera encore plus faux qu'ici" (350), as a different person, perhaps an infected[77] person; one infected with the truth that power, language, our systems, our civilization are all based upon the illusion of authority that masks the material reality of our powerlessness before death. Texts and codes determine authority figures that are signs

[77] Infection recalls footnote 59 in this chapter that develops the intertextual relation with Genet, Baudelaire, and d'Aubigné who all claim that the text is a means of representing evil to influence a change to society through poetic language.

polluted with excess in modern times. Genet's drama continues to speak to our current state in which social, digital, and physical excess pollutes the traditional power structures that govern us and render them weak. However the activist challenge is for the individual reader to reinvent, evolve, and overcome the falseness of reactionary authority and the illusion of progressive revolution.

Genet also challenges us to be aware of the fact that authority's power comes through language and its control over the distribution of text. Perhaps he wrote *Le Balcon* as a response to his editor's court case. Perhaps he reedited the work after the court case was appealed and overturned. Perhaps Genet took Artaud's idea of staging Sade as one of the idealized performances of the Theater of Cruelty and worked it into the second tableau. The intentions behind his actions are not really of any consequence. It is his activist system of a poetics of difference that endures in the dramatic text. His didascalic voices tell how to manipulate a text for an innovative expression that provokes a politics, exposes illusion, challenges authority, and most importantly, exhibits literature and theater as a means of protest and subversion.

Conclusion

According to Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, despite Genet's call for individual revolt, he found a community in authors like Sade and Artaud: “Il y aurait ainsi une communauté glorieuse d'écrivains internés ou emprisonnés qui ont su et savent encore trouver 'en eux-mêmes' la force d'écrire bien que chassés 'du domaine de la parole donnée.' Genet

appartient à cette communauté élective, aux cotés de Sade et d'Artaud" (158). These authors sought another language outside of the "parole donnée" of a society that forces them to the margins through a prison/asylum system. Genet's language is a didascalic poetic and a well-structured system of difference and excess for the purpose of undermining and destabilizing. Reading Genet's work as an activist poetics of stage direction is a helpful means to understand the development of his literary career. In her article "L'écriture carcérale et le discours juridique chez Jean Genet," Frieda Ekotto states in his early prose novels, Genet uses a language, especially between his marginal and criminal characters, that represents "une culture plus visuelle que verbale. . . . Ils se reconnaissent aux signes tatoués sur leurs corps: maladies qui les recouvrent (poux, lèpres, etc.); l'odeur, les dessins, habits crasseux, etc" (105). In this way, even in his early career, Genet preferred for his characters to communicate via a material sign system, using sense perception like the visual, the olfactory, the gestural, etc. The body, lice, filthy material, tattoos, and disease are the didascalic, material signs that command and communicate a cultural system of *vermine* to undermine dominant discourse through an ethic of criminality. He sought in his prose writings the very power of mute speech that he would later find in the didascalie of drama as well as the mute-loquacious presence of intertextuality.

His didascalic poetic does not stop with *Le Balcon*. Genet continues to expand its use in his later works, like *Les Nègres* and *Les Paravents*. In *Les Paravents*, Sade is still present too, for example in the 14th Tableau, as French soldiers fart in the face of a dying Algerian giving him "un petit air de France" (Genet, *Les Paravents*, 220). Perhaps this

refers to Sade's fart fetish that got him in serious trouble in Marseille in 1778. Or perhaps, for Genet, there is activist power in staging the fart, as Sade found in the staging of shit eating throughout his works. The material stink of *crasse* is an important poetic sign for both authors, because it is real. It can be hidden under the artifice of simulation, but that just reinforces artifice as escape. Stink is a bodily language that communicates not only aesthetic properties like appearance, sound, and smell, but also a symbolic meaning. It should not be hidden and it needs to be exposed because it is a figure for the horror that was and is the real outcome of all revolution, power and war. For Sade and Genet, death is another truth like shit, and putrefaction, decay, infection, and corruption are the activist poetics of death. This is why Genet always mistrusted the stylized, artificial language inherent in literature and uses it masterfully to critique itself. His preference for a material approach to communication via staged poetics defines his late theater. His search for an activist poetics of the real eventually led to his abandonment of stylized literature for the material approach to social change witnessed in his onsite activism with Black Panthers and Palestinians. I hope the current study of his poetics of difference, constructed via his use of didascalie, offers scholars, as well as current activists, a deeper understanding of Genet's complex and confrontational system of aesthetic activism. He shows shit, and in *Le Balcon*, the shit he shows is Sade's writing to express the truth that you cannot and should not censor ugliness, depravity, madness, and evil. Confront it and communicate.

Conclusion

What we see in the dramas of this study is an aesthetic activism produced when theatrical properties and textual modes are in opposition for the purpose of undermining or challenging discourses of power. These authors' textual systems create a disturbance to discourse via the dynamic between the modes of didascalic and dialogic language that result in a poetics. This study of the dynamics within theatrical text expands scholarship concerning the poetics of stage direction and how they function outside of traditional modes of representation. Rancière bases his aesthetic regime on changes witnessed between representational and expressive poetics in the nineteenth-century novel. The current study of twentieth-century drama shows that instead of 'aesthetic regime,' it is possible to read the changes to poetics of representation as an 'aesthetic activism,' specifically when stage directions no longer represent diegetic discourse but rather work to undermine it as an expression of protest. For example, Apollinaire seeks to employ theatrical modes and a poetics of props to disrupt the reading of discourses of power, expand audience agency, and innovate an aesthetico-political movement of the *esprit nouveau*. Artaud inverts dialogic and didascalic modes to mimic a destructive incest that leads to dissolution of structures through violent trauma. Genet exhibits the function of theatrical modes on the scene simultaneously, like reflections in the brothel mirror, in order to highlight the dynamism of their differences. He then imposes this difference onto his text, to make his reader question the norms and laws of dominant discourses, specifically courts that control the distribution of the sensible.

In this way, it is clear that both modes of expression - the dialogic and the didascalic - are necessary for the aesthetic activism to function. Furthermore, we can understand the tension between modes through Rancière's concept of mute speech. The mute-loquacious essence of stage direction works to affect a disturbance to discourses of power and hierarchies of representation. In conclusion, we can read the mute speech power of the selected dramas to further understand Rancière's concept, but to also then apply this concept to a new understanding of changes to modes, poetics, and art forms as an aesthetic activism. In doing so, this establishes aesthetic activism as a theoretical method for reading texts to understand how poetics work as an articulation between author and public for an expression of change. Furthermore, this theoretical reading can extend beyond the scope of this dissertation focused on French drama and the specific chronology from Apollinaire to Artaud and then to Genet. In the subsequent pages, I would like to apply this theory of aesthetic activism to read a few examples - from drama, prose, and verse - in order to highlight its function as a theoretical method. The readings and analyses are brief, but they offer a glimpse of future avenues of theoretical work post-dissertation to continue to study the development of literature and art as an expression of activism.

In *Waiting for Godot,* first published in French in 1952 and then in English in 1954, Beckett uses textual tension between modes in the famous lines that conclude both acts:

> Estragon: Well, shall we go?
> Vladimir: Yes let's go.
> *They do not move*. (36)

This simple staging in the text of opposition between modes creates tension and difference that undermines not only the characters, but also the reader's, position vis-à-vis

meaning and action. In doing so, Beckett stages both the reader's and the characters' alienation from meaning in the world around them. Furthermore, the repetition of this staging to conclude both acts, hints at the eternal return of the absurdities and anxieties of modern life, where one is alienated from meaning and action. This simple tension, based in opposing dramatic modes, raises the question where can our culture go after repetitive wars, failures of revolutions, capitalist exploitation, and environmental destruction? And even if our culture moves, it will only end up in the same place. The only thing to do is to stick together to avoid adding the crushing weight of loneliness and isolation to the already disturbing and debilitating effects of anxiety, tension, and alienation. With this simple, yet highly poetic correspondence between the material world and discourse, Beckett offers the theatrical text as a space to provoke social commentary, thus rendering his theatrical text as a form of aesthetic activism. In addition, we can also interpret the scene in which Pozzo commands Lucky through a directorial poetics. Pozzo's abrupt commands and insults contrast the detailed directions indicating gestural movement. This produces another type of tension between modes. As the wealthy landowner commands and humiliates the 'mouth-breathing' worker, this textual tension stages class crisis to further add sociopolitical commentary to the work and strengthen the activist voice of the absurdist play. The full impact of the scene, I believe, is only achieved through reading the extensive direction. The performance of Lucky on stage becomes more of a clownish whirlwind of movement, which loses the vitriolic tone of Pozzo established via the difference of reading abrupt one word commands juxtaposed textually against extensive description of gestural movements.

Through doing so, Beckett shows us the cruelty of direction that harkens back to Artaud's directorial poetics of gesture and tension between movement and word.

We can find another example in Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade,* written in 1963 and first performed in West Berlin in 1964. *Marat/Sade* is the logical, and chronological, inheritor of the playwrights discussed in this dissertation. Beyond the clear connection to Sade as a central extradiegetic figure, the drama is, according to director Peter Brook, an example of "total theater" (vi) that recalls the Apollinairian synthesis of arts. It is also "a very complex form, like in Genet" (vi) and a "mixture of all the best theatrical ingredients around - Brechtian, didactic, absurdist, Theater of Cruelty" (vi). Moreover, the play is in dialogue with theatrical form and mode since "the idea of the play is the play itself" (vii). As for a sociopolitical reading, the drama stages discourses of reactionary fatalism through Sade, revolutionary hope through Marat, as well as Napoleonic pride via the asylum director Coulmier. His drama gives presence to several historical discourses of power. Furthermore, Weiss describes the play as "Marxist" and Brook agrees that "it is firmly on the side of revolutionary change" (vii) although the change is not defined by the play, or playwright, but rather is left to the audience to decide. This imperative of audience agency is similar to the dramas in the dissertation that render the audience as part of the extra-diegetic articulation. For the aesthetic activism determined through tensions of modes, we can look to the epilogue for an example. After the character Corday stabs Marat, the drama transitions from the performance of the diegesis--the assassination plot--to the 'play within the play' of extradiegetic staging as Coulmier thanks Sade, who is the director of the production that consists of mental patient inmates of the Charenton asylum. In a way that recalls Madame

Irma at the end of *Le Balcon* and Thérèse at the end of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, in this final scene, Coulmier addresses the audience:

> Enlightened ladies pious gentlemen
> let's close the history book and then
> return to eighteen-eight the present day
> of which though not unclouded we may say
> it promises that mankind soon will cease
> to fear the storms of war the squalls of peace
> *The music turns more and more into a monotonous march. The Patients in the background mark time. Their unrest increases.*
> For today we live in far different times
> We have no oppressors no violent crimes
> and although we're at war anyone can see
> it can only end in victory. (99)

In this passage, we find a poetic didascalie that interrupts a discourse of power. The direction is poeticized through correspondence as the music of the march meets the gestures of marking time and unrest. The discourse is of Napoleonic empire, but could also extend to any form of dominant discourse that lays claim to victory and a narrative of progress. In this way, there is tension between the dominant discourse of 'peace' that contrasts the growing unrest and tension among the patients who are mute inmates of the asylum. The mute inmates refer to the mute assassins of Artaud's tragedy, to then be understood as textual figures for the mute speech poetics of the direction that interrupt and disturb in this scene Coulmier's prideful monologue of progress. As the Epilogue progresses, the unrest of the patients grows until they "*are fully at the mercy of their mad march like dance. Many of them hop and spin in ecstasy*" (102). The directions establish tension to undermine the Napoleonic discourse voiced by Coulmier and the four singers. This disruption of dominant discourse renders Weiss's use of stage direction, and the

figure of the mute inmate, as a form of aesthetic activism. In this way, Weiss offers the theatrical text as a means of undermining power whether in 1793, 1808, 1963, or even today. This tension between modes creates what Peter Brook calls the "unbroken conflict between impressions and judgments" (vi). The impressions are the material conditions of the didascalie and the judgments are the discourses of power, voiced by characters that are figures for aesthetic and political systems.

Furthermore, the concept of aesthetic activism can be a theoretical means of understanding changes to text, outside of the genre of drama. It can be used to understand how manipulations to other traditional structures, like narrative prose and lyric poetry for example, can be read as infused with an activist purpose of sociopolitical provocation. For an example from prose narrative, we can recall the ninth prose-poem from Chant Deuxième included in Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror,* briefly discussed in the chapter on Genet. In the first line, Ducasse details an animal figure: "Il existe un insecte que les hommes nourrissent à leurs frais. Ils ne lui doivent rien; mais ils le craignent. Celui-ci, qui n'aime pas le vin, mais qui préfère le sang […] serait capable, d'écraser les hommes" (154). Ducasse defines the insect, which he later labels as "poux" or lice, or singular the louse, as a predatory animal, one that is nourished on flesh and blood, and one with the power to destroy. In this scene, Ducasse's narrative prose describes a sexual union between the narrator and the louse that can create a pit of lice used for the destruction of humanity. To create this pit, he must sexually lie with a female louse:

> J'arrachai un pou femelle au cheveu de l'humanité. On m'a vu se coucher avec lui pendant trois nuits consécutives, et je le jetai dans la fosse. La fécondation humaine, qui aurait été nulle dans d'autres cas pareils, fut acceptée, cette fois, par

la fatalité; et, au bout de quelques jours, des milliers de monstres, grouillant dans un nœud compacte de matière, naquirent à la lumière. (158)

Through the sex act with the louse, Maldoror would be able to create the spectacle of blocks of lice dissolving in the sewers of cities so that "la race humaine serait anéantie, en proie à des douleurs terribles. Quel spectacle!" (160). Ziegler acknowledges this scene in his article "The Environment of Aggression in *Les Chants de Maldoror*" and states that "by means of the fecundation of a female louse, Maldoror is able to generate a living river of vermin that grows" (177). Ziegler passes over the sexual act in order to focus on the primary objective of destruction inherent in this river that the poet employs as a figure to "break down the boundaries people build around them" via a "liberation through violence associated with a liquid medium" (177). I read this passage in a metatextual way, based on Ducasse's descriptions from *Poésie I,* that his violent and transgressive figures are representative of his poetic method.[78] The millions of monstrous lice are figures for his prose-poetic. The passage of his "créature monstrueuse" from fixed form in block, pit, and Earth to free flowing river is a textual staging of his changes to verse poetry that result in his fluid prose. Through dissolving poetic structure, and its cultural affiliations, Ducasse hopes to influence a similar breakdown in society. We can read his changes to verse structure that result in the fluid poetic prose of his *Chants*, as an aesthetic activism that seeks sociopolitical provocation through changes to literary form.

[78] In *Poésies I*, Ducasse describes his poetic as "cette poésie moite des langueurs, pareille à de la pourriture. Passer des mots aux idées, il n'y a qu'un pas" (354). Ducasse then expands for several pages a list of various figures found throughout Les Chants that are "ces charniers immondes" which, when confronted, should prompt the reader to "réagir contre ce qui nous choque et nous courbe si souverainement" (356). In this way, we understand his provocative images, like the zoophilia involving the louse, as representative of a poetic expression meant to provoke the reader to react in a political context, as offered by the term "souverainement."

Another example of how changes to text, and specifically verse poetics, can provoke a politics is found in Louis Aragon's 1920 collection *Feu de Joie,* written about his experiences during the Great war. Throughout the work, Aragon manipulates the layout of the poetic line to create a step down effect, often breaking the line at syntactic and rhythmic levels, to present to the reader a deliberate effect of fragmentation. I argue that this fragmenting visually represents a trench, and thus corresponds to Aragon's experiences during the war, as well as to Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* techniques of using textual layout to create visual impressions. The poem "Secousse" is an example of Aragon's "trenching" effect, achieved through his use of the mute speech of blank space:

> Mon coeur est en morceaux
> le paysage en miettes. (8)

The trenching effect in this example is imposed upon the alexandrine line. Through fracturing and separating the traditional alexandrine, Aragon creates an important association between contemporary violence of war and traditional poetic form. Aragon's trenching of the line exemplifies another form of aesthetic activism that seeks an expression of sociopolitical commentary, in this case the trauma of war, through changes to traditional forms like the alexandrine. Jay Winter finds something similar to aesthetic activism in his work on Grande Guerre soldier poets who do not reject "les formes traditionnelles pour exprimer la mort mais plutôt de leur trouver une nouvelle formulation pour leur donner une énergie nouvelle" (67). Winter's claim is helpful to assist a definition of aesthetic activism as a method that employs innovation of traditional forms to provoke sociopolitical commentary. In Aragon's work, the separation in the line is a blank space of mute speech, similar to a 'no man's land,' where the poet loses his subjectivity, his voice, his

consciousness, but not his expression. There is still meaning to the mute speech of a poetics intended to disrupt, not only the line, but also the interconnected traditions of war and poetry. The power of Aragon's work is that he represents a trench, not through the verbal medium, but through a visual layout of the line using the mute speech of blank space. In doing so, the reader does not need to translate any language, which could prove difficult based on cultural, poetical, and grammatical restrictions. Through his aesthetic activism that trenches the line, Aragon offers a way to bypass the constraints of language through the use of a poetics of mute speech.

To finish, I would like to say one more thing about the importance of text over performance. Through performance, an artwork loses its literariness and thus the disruptive possibilities of the mute-loquacious letter that can be anywhere at anytime for anyone. The power dynamics inherent in the privilege of theater further undermine the activist impact of performance. However, one can find a disrupting force in the mute speech of props. For example in Spring 2016, I worked with undergraduates on a production of *En Attendant Godot*. In the first Act, we dressed Pozzo to resemble then presidential candidate Donald Trump, who commands Lucky, dressed as an American "deplorable," to move, act, dance, and think. There were no spoken indications of the American election, and really no relevance between the play and the election other than this one power dynamic. In this example, the mute speech poetics of the staging--the wig, the suit and tie, the leash, the whip--convey a mute but not silent critique of the real estate mogul's control over the American worker. In this way, the poetics of direction and the mute speech power of disruption can be found outside of the text via the extradiegetic elements of performance.

However, there is no tension between the intrinsic modes of performance to define an aesthetic activism. The mute poetics of costuming and prop are still for the traditional purpose of representing meaning and power dynamic, not necessarily undermining it. This claim then confirms the true power of text that can circulate freely to anyone and be about anything. Perhaps the mute speech power can extend to all forms of text.[79]

To conclude, from the study of textual dynamics, tensions between literary modes, and their apparent connections to the social world, we can understand the expressive properties and poetic potential within the text. This means of finding innovations and expressions between modes and within mute spaces occurs through the continual support of literary studies, as well as dramatic performances. A textual study of the tension of modes is relevant to our politically charged climate of the university. Via literary studies, students can understand the power of changes to forms that, like the mute-loquacious letter, can reach a much larger public outside of the theater of protest. In this way, we can continue to achieve a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the activist potential that is mute but never silent in the everyday forms around us.

[79] In our digital world of social media, text is omnipresent, albeit in new forms that are currently establishing their own power structures and politics of digital traditions to determine the hierarchies of representation and the distribution of the sensible that mold and structure our society. I hope aesthetic activism extends to textual relations of code, website, twitter, youtube, facebook and all forms of digital textual media. Perhaps their intrinsic forms and structures can be manipulated to comment on their young traditions to then provoke a politics.

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